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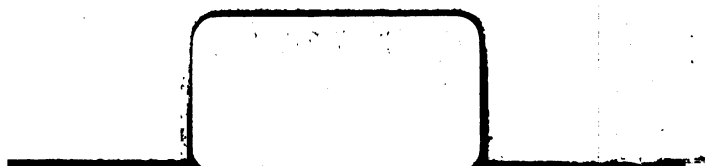
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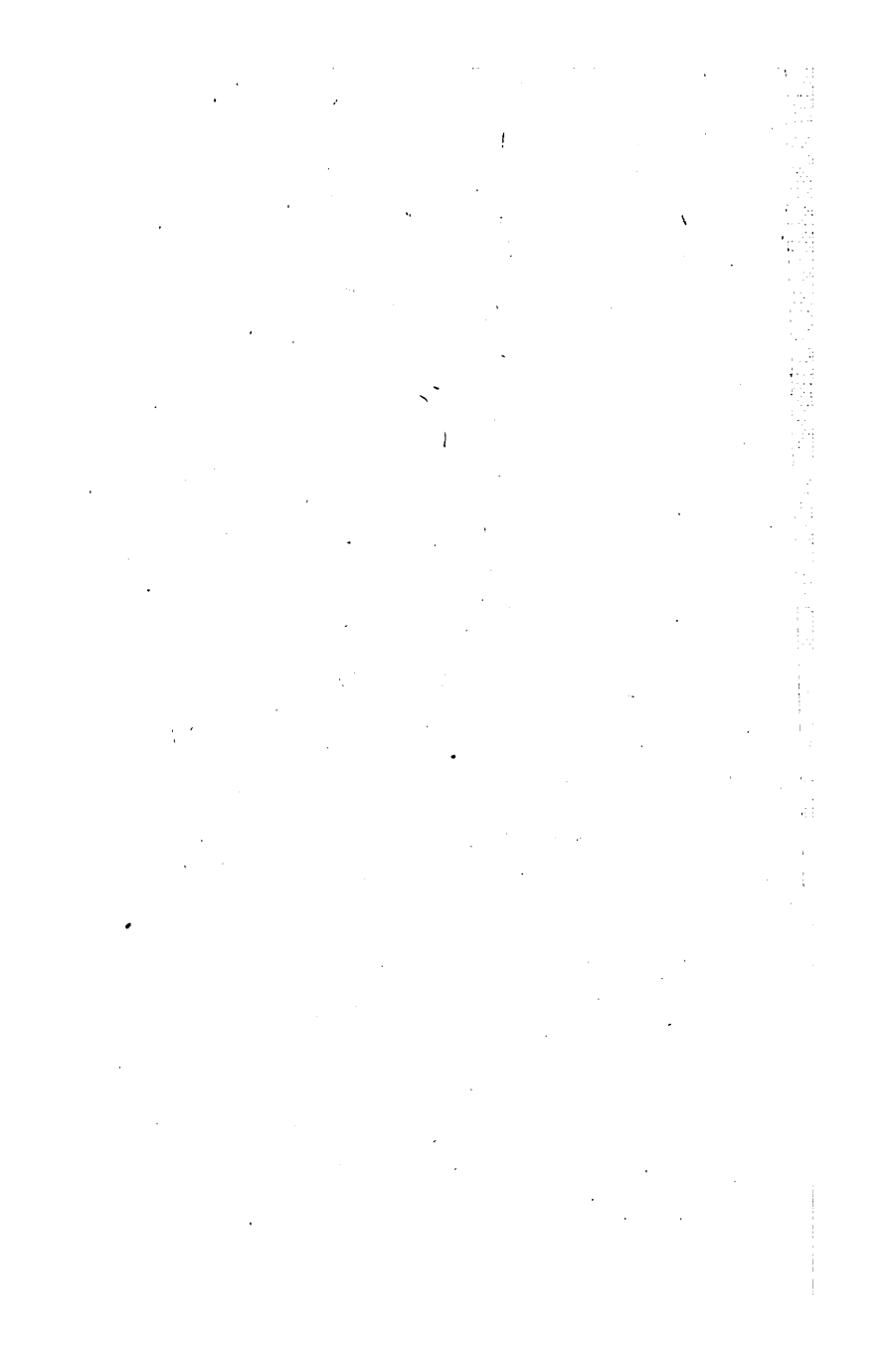


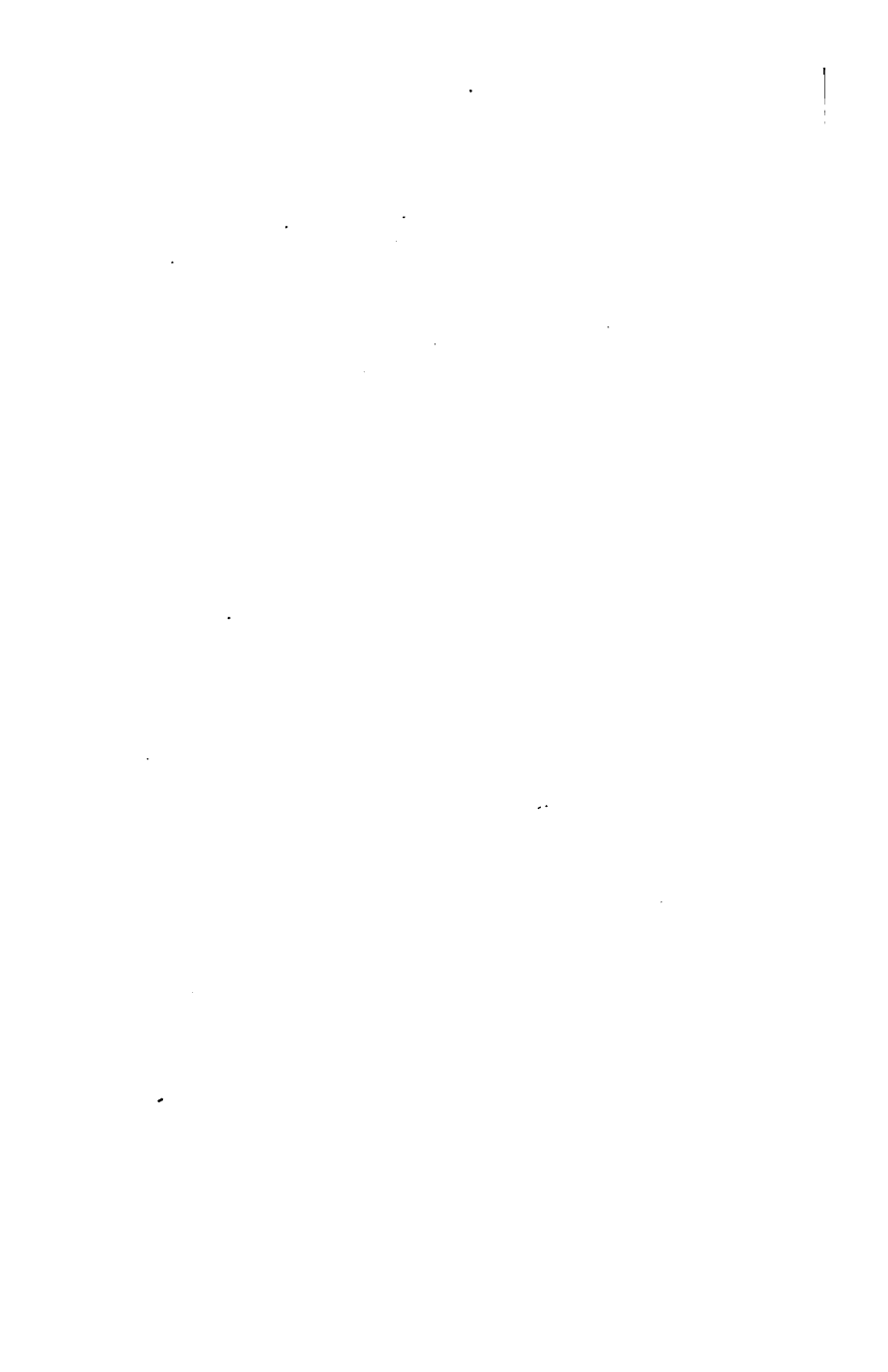
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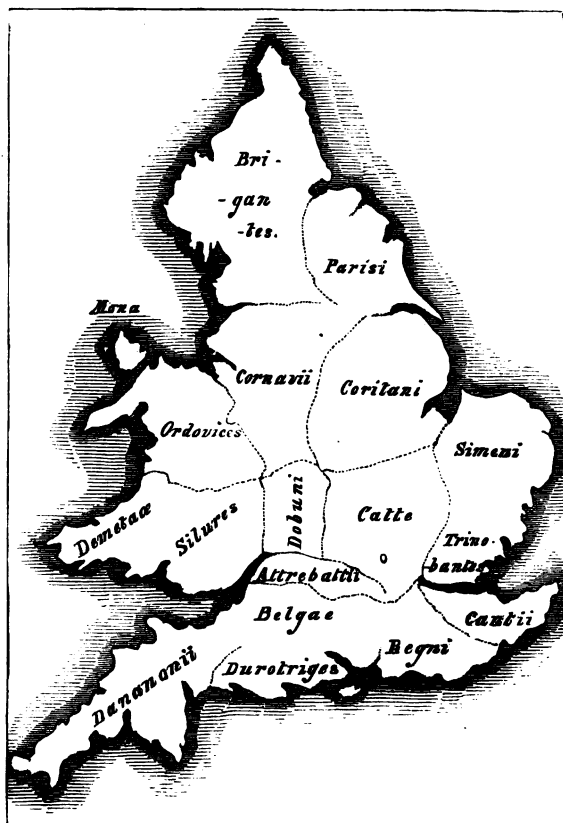
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THE
ANCIENT BRITONS.

A Tale of Primeval Life.



"THESE STONES SHALL RISE WITH THEIR MOSS AND SPEAK
TO OTHER YEARS."



LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.

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PREFACE.

THE scenes and characters of this tale being drawn in a very remote era of British history, an explanatory remark seems required, as previous writers of historical sketches have usually chosen more recent periods for illustration.

The state of society among the ancient Britons is involved in much obscurity, and chiefly, it may be presumed, because no imaginative writer has attempted its elucidation. To become intimately acquainted with a people, it is necessary to be introduced to their firesides, and share in their home enjoyments and sorrows ; to see them in their temple, and mingle in the solemnities of their worship ; to accompany them to their judicial assembly, and be made conversant with all the various phases of their public and private life. The murmurs of the slave, the sighs of the oppressed, the words of the religious teacher, and the voice of the wise lawgiver, must reach our ear. In short, the pastimes, habits, and usages of all classes of a community must be brought before the mental eye, in an ideal picture, so distinct

and vivid in all its parts, that the reader may not fail to realise the scenes and characters of the age selected for illustration. But this is not the vocation of the historian, who is restrained within narrower limits by the rules of historic composition. It is the province of the imaginative writer, to give to the page of history the impress of actual life; and hence the civil and social condition of a people, which has been illustrated in the historic novel or tale, is most familiarised to the mind.

As no imaginative sketch of the state of the ancient Briton has yet been attempted, the author has ventured on this untrodden path, not, indeed, with the expectation of producing a tale of thrilling interest, yet with a hope of framing one, suited, by its simplicity, to effect the intended object.

The historical notices of the ancient British period are few and meagre; and consequently the attempt to give both a striking and truthful picture of British society has proved one of some difficulty. For to delineate faithfully, and yet graphically, the wise Druid, the fierce British warrior, the daring hunter, and the unhappy slave, as each appeared in weal or woe, in war or peace, at home or abroad, requires a much larger amount of historic knowledge of the early inhabitants of this island, than has been transmitted to the present age.

Whether the main design of this tale has been accomplished, is now to be decided. Having represented the Druid priests, in the following pages, as they ap-

peared among the people, the author, if encouraged, proposes, in a future volume, to portray this singular order of men, in the exercise of their holy functions, in the sacred grove, in their daily teaching, and in their nightly meditations. The doctrines of Druidism, its traditions and curious lore, and mystic rites, together with the severe discipline and singular trials through which the Druidical votary had to pass, before he could reach the highest rank of the order, will be delineated with as much accuracy, as a long and diligent investigation of the sources of information, which have come down to the present time, will admit.

THE
ANCIENT BRITONS.

A Tale of Primeval Life.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the first tints of autumn appeared on the green foliage of the primeval forests of ancient Britain,* its skin-clad inhabitants were rejoicing at the departure of Cæsar, who had made, during

* The word 'Britain' is traced to different etymological sources by different authors. Some have derived it from Baratanæe, a Phœnician word, signifying 'a country of tin.' Others have supposed it to come from Brithon, 'contentious, warriors.' Some authors, however, contend, that *brith* means 'painted, tinted, variegated;' and in the language of Brittany, *brytho*, to paint, and *brittanica*, variegated, have the same meaning. Hence it has been imagined, that the name Britain is derived from a custom among the inhabitants of painting their bodies. But as this practice was probably not confined to the Britons, some other derivation seems more plausible; and that of Dr. Borlase is not an unlikely one. He considers Britain to come from a Hebrew root signifying 'separation;' and

this year,* a second attempt to add this country to the Roman Empire. Bond and free could now return to the "familiar habit" of their lives. The rude chief again directed his attention to his schemes of plunder, or conquest of neighbouring tribes, or turned to his pursuits as a brave and skilful hunter. The Druid sage once more indulged in his peaceful meditations amid the sacred groves, celebrated his mystic rites, and resumed the exercise of his all-powerful sway over the people. Even the poor slave was content to return to the drudgery of his hard condition, imagining that he had perhaps escaped a worse lot under new masters.

The joy of the Briton was shared by the Roman. The shores of a barbarous country, where not many laurels could be won, were left without regret; and when a few sad thoughts had been given to those whom death had laid beneath a foreign soil, the soldiers of Cæsar turned their attention to future scenes of glory, scarcely supposing

it is probable that the first settlers in Britain would give the country a name significant of its geographical situation, with regard to the mainland from which they had come. There is, however, another and perhaps a still more probable derivation of the word Britain; but as it is intimately connected with the Druidical mysteries, it can scarcely be given with propriety in this volume.

* B.C. 54.

that any of their brave companions were left to suffer the miseries of captivity among a rude and vindictive people. This was the case, however, in one instance.

The Britons hazarded no general engagement with the Romans, but lurked in their woods, and harassed the invaders by sallying out when numbers gave them a temporary advantage over small parties of the enemy. In one of these skirmishes a Roman officer became their captive. For, having fallen wounded and insensible from his horse, he was left among the slain by his own men, as they hurriedly retreated before the superior force which opposed them; and in this manner fell into the hands of the Britons, and was subsequently removed into the neighbouring forest. There he lay, ill and helpless, at the time of Cæsar's departure from Britain, and continued long afterwards unacquainted with that event.

When Octavius Scapula, the Roman, had partially recovered from the stupor into which he had been thrown, he at first imagined that he was awakening from a disturbed and heavy slumber. But he soon found that his sleep had been neither that of the healthy nor the free. His limbs were stiff and weary, and his head painful and giddy. Surprised at his helpless state, and still more at

the strange confusion of his thoughts, he sat up with difficulty, and looked around him with the dim eye of sickness. No familiar object met his gaze, but a new and strange scene was before him; and then the truth, that he was not with his companions, nor in the Roman encampment, slowly revealed itself to his doubting mind.

He was in a rude habitation, and alone; but the fire, which burned in the centre of the hut, gave evidence of the recent presence of some other person; and the conviction became irresistible, that he was a captive among the Britons. The recollection of the last contest in which he had engaged, up to the moment of his fall, returned to his mind; and, with these thoughts, some sense of the perils of his present condition called up feelings of alarm, which were too exciting for his feeble state, and from which, sinking down on his rushy couch, he was soon relieved through exhaustion.

The slumber into which he fell was long and heavy; daylight waned away, and night came on, and still he slept; but this repose was scarcely desirable, as it was only strengthening him to wake up finally to clearer perceptions of his extreme wretchedness. And this he did with the morning light, when, on opening his eyes, he beheld one

of the rude natives of Britain standing by, and earnestly looking upon him.

Startled at the sight, his first thought was for the arms which had often been his defence in peril; but these were no longer by his side; for he was a disarmed man and a wounded prisoner. The fear of immediate danger was, however, checked almost as soon as it arose, on observing, with the quick eye of a soldier, that there were no warlike weapons at hand, and that the man before him was the only person besides himself in the hut.

The appearance of this Briton, too, was not such as to create alarm in a Roman soldier. A skin, fastened to his body by a few splinters of wood, was the only garment he wore. His face was meagre and thin, his beard rudely cut, and his sunburnt and weathered complexion strongly contrasted with the light matted hair, which hung in disorderly tresses from his head. He looked on the Roman with a timid and dejected manner, and not as a cruel and revengeful foe.

Apparently surprised at the change which he saw had taken place in the wounded captive, he hastily drew back a few paces, and then stood motionless, earnestly looking on him who had so lately lain there with few signs of life. The Roman, seeing that the Briton regarded him with

great curiosity mingled with fear, felt satisfied that from this man there was nothing to dread.

Octavius had gained, in his frequent intercourse with the Gauls, some knowledge of the Celtic language, and he now ventured to address his companion; but the Briton made no reply, and soon afterwards walked quietly away to the fire, apparently satisfied that the Roman was still exceedingly feeble and helpless.

Octavius, finding there was no chance of drawing the Briton into a conversation from which he might gather some idea of his present position and future prospects, took another survey of his new home. The hut was small, of a circular form, and built of a few stakes driven into the ground and wattled together, and roofed with branches. From this slight construction the Roman concluded that the place was only a temporary dwelling, perhaps raised in haste as a shelter for himself; but, beyond this inference, he could not penetrate further into the mystery of his novel situation. And now, wearied and exhausted, he was about to lie down again, when he saw the Briton cautiously approaching him. Rather startled by this wary conduct, he anxiously watched this man until he was quite close to him. The harmless Briton then offered the exhausted Ro-

man some food, consisting of meat in the liquor in which it had been boiled. This friendly act restored the confidence of Octavius, and he gladly partook of the nourishment which he so much needed; and now, somewhat refreshed and more composed, he lay down for further rest, and soon fell into a tranquil slumber, from which he did not again awake until night had spread its dark mantle over all things within and without the hut.

The low rustling of the leaves on the roof of the dwelling, and the pain of his limbs, soon reminded him of the momentous change which had come over his condition in life. He was now a helpless captive in the hands of a rude people; and though his present companion seemed to intend him no evil, he knew too well the horrid cruelties frequently practised on war captives, even by his own nation, to have confidence in the prolonged mercies of barbarians.*

Octavius naturally supposed that the uncivi-

* 'Barbarian,' applied by the Greeks and Romans to a foreigner, and used in this sense in the New Testament. According to some writers, the term signified 'bearded men.' As the Romans found most of the nations whom they subdued in a much lower state of civilisation than their own people, the appellation of 'stranger' would convey to their minds a sense similar to that which 'barbarian' bears among the moderns.

lised Briton would be far more cruel than the civilised Roman; and this inference appeared a fair one. Yet a closer consideration of the subject would have warranted a different conclusion. The war-dance of the barbarian around his unhappy prisoners, and his subsequent slaughter of them, was not more sanguinary than the frightful treatment of the war captives in the circus at Rome. The same cruel spirit was every where abroad, in the polished circles of the renowned city, and in the rude town, where a few clans associated and dwelt together. And it owed its origin to a common cause—erroneous ideas of God, of life and its duties, which necessarily gave birth to false conceptions of human conduct.

Octavius insensibly wandered from anticipations of British cruelty to the remembrance of his comrades, and to conjectures as to the distance which might lie between him and them. He knew that the camp was not above a league beyond the spot where he had fallen; and he could not suppose that the Britons would remove him very far from that place. In the thought, however, that friendly companions were at no great distance, he found little comfort. He could not leave his prison-house to seek them, and they would probably never find him in his present retreat.

His dejection increased as he saw more clearly the hopelessness of his situation, and the anguish and excitement of his mind added to his bodily sufferings, and rendered him truly wretched.

The fire had long died away, and the chill night-wind entered the hut by numerous apertures. Cold, comfortless, and miserable, the lonely captive sighed as he listened to the profound repose of the Briton. How enviable to a watchful and weary spirit seem the unbroken slumbers of the healthy and the happy! And happy, Octavius presumed his companion to be; for thinking only of his own misfortunes, he forgot that sorrow is more or less, at some period of life, the heritage of all; and, that were the secrets of every heart disclosed, the lot of very few would be desired by even those who deem themselves the most unfortunate of the human family.

As this long night wore away, the Roman began to look with anxiety for the coming morning, expecting the arrival of some of the British warriors, who had taken him prisoner; but the day dawned and died away with the stillness which had marked its course; no one came. Several days passed away in the same monotonous manner, during which Octavius began to observe that his companion was as anxious an expectant as himself.

The Briton rarely spoke, but would sit for hours in a listening posture, with his eyes fixed on the doorway; and would sometimes suddenly arise, and murmuring to himself, hastily leave the hut, as if he went out in the hope of meeting some person whom he expected to see. But he always came back alone, and with evident discontent and impatience of manner.

For several days, while the Roman lay in a state of great weakness and pain, Cormo, the Briton, often absented himself for an hour at a time from the hut; and during these intervals, Octavius, as soon as he was able, exerted the little strength which he had regained, and moved about the place, to recover the use of his limbs. He soon found himself able to walk a short distance from the door of the dwelling, and was then satisfied that it stood within the forest, and most likely in that part which immediately skirted the fatal spot where he had fallen, wounded and insensible.

With increasing eagerness to regain sufficient strength to reach his companions in arms, as the probability of their nearness to him grew stronger, he forgot, one day, his usual caution, and did not return to his resting place in the hut, until surprised by the appearance of the Briton, whose amazement at beholding the wounded warrior

abroad in the open air was evidently mingled with much fear.

From this hour a change came over Cormo. He went out no more for any length of time; and food occasionally became scarce, though he often fasted himself for more than a day, apparently to eke out, as long as he could, his small store for Octavius; and only took up his bow and arrows to obtain a fresh supply when absolutely obliged.

There appeared, indeed, great inconsistency in the conduct of this man. He evidently saw the returning health and strength of the Roman with increasing apprehension, and yet he laboured so much to contribute to the comfort of his charge, that he certainly hastened the result which he appeared to dread.

Octavius, as time passed away and he became stronger, often thought of secretly leaving the hut, and rejoining the army; but several considerations deterred him from making the attempt. The vigilance of the Briton allowed no opportunity of escaping by day, and scarcely a chance by night: for since he had found Octavius capable of walking beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the hut, he had invariably laid himself down close to the doorway to sleep. Octavius doubted, too, the probability of his pursuing the right course to the

Roman station, and whether, on his arrival there, he should find it still occupied by his companions, as Cæsar's stay was short at every encampment in Britain.

While the Roman hesitated a few more days, his hopes, that the army still continued near him, grew less, and, at length, he gave up all idea of joining them at present. His thoughts then turned to Cormo, whose reserve was daily diminishing; and he began to think that he should eventually succeed in gaining from him some information of the designs of his countrymen towards himself, and which might serve to guide him into a safe way of escaping from his present position.

One day, as they sat together in the hut, while rain was falling heavily, the prospect of remaining here much longer seemed to Octavius cheerless, if not perilous; and the desire, for a more comfortable and secure home, became increasingly urgent. But until he could make his companion more communicative, there seemed no chance of improving his situation, and still less of regaining his liberty. While studying how to accomplish his wishes, the thought suddenly arose, as he looked on the Briton, that he must have some other cause for his deep and constant melancholy, than his anxiety about the safe custody of himself.

To draw from Cormo his own private history seemed a likely way of gaining his confidence, and of breaking through the feeling of restraint, which still existed between them. Octavius, with this design, began a conversation, in which, after alluding to his own misfortunes, he touched upon various other troubles that chequer the life of man.

The Briton, who was crouching by the fire, with his head resting on his hands, continued silent so long, although he looked earnestly on the Roman, that Octavius began almost to despair of success. But coming to the subject of slavery, and declaring that that must be the worst of all evils, he found he had at length touched a chord which immediately vibrated in the breast of Cormo; for he suddenly exclaimed, with more energy than he had ever shewn before—

“Roman, you are right. A slave suffers the most cruel of all wrongs; he bears the heaviest of all burdens. The proud will not look upon him, and even the great and good care little for him. He lives to toil, and when he dies, he is soon forgotten. What bard will sing of his sorrows, and keep up the memory of his name! Ah! he has no name.”

“You are a slave, then, Cormo?” said Octavius,

in a tone which bespoke the compassionate interest that he took in the Briton's condition in life.

Cormo replied with a heavy sigh, "I am; but I was not born one, as these noble marks witness." As he spoke, he threw back his garment of skin to point to the curiously traced figures on different parts of his person, into which a blue dye had been infused, according to the custom of body-painting,* so prevalent in early times among all rude nations. "My father," he continued, "was the leading chief of his tribe, and in his day of strength the hero of many battles. He even defeated the Catte† in his

* The first and most simple stage of body-painting was that of adorning the body with one colour; and the most advanced, that of tracing upon it various figures. This was a painful process, and those who bore the deepest punctures with the greatest fortitude were admired for their endurance. The number and size of the figures, and the skill displayed in their just representation, denoted the rank of the individual. Woad, or dyer's weed, was the herb from which the Britons extracted their blue and black dyes.

† The Catte, and by the Romans called Cassi, Cattevellauni, and Cattecludani, were a people who occupied the tract of country now comprehended in the counties of Hertford, Bedford, and Buckinghamshire. They were the bravest of the British tribes,‡ and took the lead in opposing the Roman forces under Julius Cæsar and the armies of Claudius. In the interval of these two invasions, between which nearly a century elapsed, the Catte subdued many

‡ There were, it is supposed, above forty tribes in Britain at the time of Julius Cæsar's invasion.

years of renown, and drove them back to their own lands, and made them fear his name. But the winter of years shed its snow on his head, and his latter days were darkened by misfortune. One son after another fell in the strife of spears, until I, the child of his old age, was left alone to comfort him. Hunger and sickness laid many in the narrow house; and when my father's arm was weak and his warriors few, the Catte came for the last time. To shun the enemy, we lay hid in the forest wild; but they hunted us out, and made us fly from place to place, until my father's proud heart could bear no more. He called his scattered tribe together, and bade them follow him to the death of the brave. They obeyed him, and perished; and since that fatal hour I have been a slave. The Catte took me captive, together with the feeble remnant of the tribe. All now are gone, and I have long been alone, the last of my race."

Octavius was about to ask what had become of the slave's companions in misfortune, when he observed that Cormo had covered his face with his hands, while an involuntary shudder shook his

of the British tribes to their authority. On both occasions of resisting the Roman power, the Catte were led by distinguished warriors; Julius Cæsar being opposed by Cassibelan, and the forces of Claudius by the renowned but unfortunate Caradoc, or, according to the Latin terminology, Caractacus.

frame, as he sighed heavily. These evidences of painful, and perhaps frightful recollections, silenced the Roman, who now remembered that the Britons were much addicted to human sacrifice.

From Cormo's account, too, he had discovered that his captors were Catte warriors, from whom there was less chance of mercy for himself, than from any other British tribe. For Cassibelan,* their leader, had been commander-in-chief of all the British forces against Cæsar; and he and his tribe had occupied the most prominent position, and had probably sustained the greatest loss in the war. Octavius, therefore, felt for a time disin-

* There are few historical notices of Cassibelan. He was an able and experienced warrior, at the head of the most powerful British tribe, and was appointed commander-in-chief of all the British forces assembled in defence of the country against the invasion of Julius Cæsar. Successive defeats, and the jealousy and defection of all his allies, and even the sacking of his capital, could not subdue his indomitable spirit. To extricate himself from his perplexing position, to avenge his losses, and to vanquish the Romans, he formed a bold scheme, which at once displayed a vigorous mind, and talents superior to most men of his age. He despatched messengers to the four chieftains of Kent, over whom he had some military influence, with an order to fall upon and destroy, if possible, the Roman navy, in the absence of Cæsar. His wishes were promptly obeyed; and if the attempt had proved successful, the Romans must have been involved in great difficulties, and would not have been able to retire from Britain with such an assumption of glory as they effected.

clined to hear more of the slave's history ; but he soon remembered that the present was a favourable moment, to draw from his companion whatever he knew of the motives of the Catte warriors, in leaving him a prisoner so long under Cormo's care.

The Briton, rendered more communicative by the sympathy and interest which the Roman had shewn in listening to his own tale of sorrow, was easily led on to disclose that he was the slave of Cingotrix, a Catte warrior, whose son had been taken prisoner by the Romans in a skirmish, prior to the one in which Octavius had last engaged.

The fall of the Roman had immediately suggested to the British warrior a scheme for the recovery of his son ; but at that moment he had time only to command Cormo to watch by the wounded Roman, while he led his party on in eager chase after the retreating enemy. As soon as they came within a distant view of the Roman station, the wary warriors desisted from further pursuit, and quickly took to the cover of the woods.

Here they separated into small parties, intending to lie in ambush for a time, which gave their chief the opportunity he desired of privately withdrawing from them, and returning to the place where he had left Cormo. Cingotrix assisted his

slave in conveying the insensible Roman into the forest, where they hastily constructed the hut as a temporary shelter. The chief then commanded the slave to dress the wounds of the captive, and take care of him, until he could return; and to ensure the slave's strict attention to his desires, he promised him his freedom as the reward of his fidelity. "And what a happy day will that be, when, with spear in hand, I stand among the proud Catte warriors!" exclaimed Cormo, breaking off abruptly, without mentioning his master's departure from the hut; for the thought of the promised boon, coveted through many long years of hardship and hopelessness, completely engrossed his attention. The air of exultation and happiness soon, however, disappeared from his countenance; and the usual melancholy expression again spread over it, as he added despondingly,—“But the good chief tarries long; perhaps some evil has befallen him, and I may never more be free to wander in the wild woods, and follow the joyous horn of the hunter.”

“The gods forbid!” exclaimed Octavius, who felt greatly relieved on finding that, instead of being reserved for the cruel purposes of warriors, even his restoration to Cæsar was contemplated by his conqueror; and warmly grasping the hand

of Cormo, he added, in a sympathising tone, "Your faithfulness must be rewarded; and whatever be my future lot, I shall rejoice in your freedom and happiness."

The sympathy of the Roman for the poor slave touched his heart, and he looked up in the face of Octavius with more gratitude than he could express. Cormo had become daily more interested in the captive, whose behaviour to himself, when contrasted with that of the British chiefs, was greatly in the Roman's favour.

The slave imagined, in his simplicity, that the generosity and friendliness of Octavius sprang from an unusual goodness of heart; and this produced in the bosom of the Briton a feeling of almost affectionate regard. But the Roman was only an ordinary man, whose pride had been temporarily subdued by his misfortunes. The suffering he had lately undergone, and the consciousness that he was in bondage to men, perhaps vindictive and cruel, had stirred up in his own bosom compassionate and friendly regards even for a British slave. The words of the poor and lowly, which have come warm from the heart, have often been a solace to the wealthy and mighty, when overtaken by adversity; and hence, while the slave was gladdened by the condescension and

sympathy of Octavius, he, in his turn, had been much comforted by the kindly attentions of the rude and humble Briton.

As the rain had now ceased, they arose together, and having shaken the wet from their garments, they proceeded to make the best provision they could for their mutual comfort during the ensuing night. Cormo raked together the live embers, and put on fresh wood; and soon a cheerful light and warmth were spread throughout the dripping habitation. And here, in this rude hut, in a wild and dreary forest-land, the two fellow-captives, though widely separated by rank, language, and habits, but whom misfortune had for the time united by mutual sympathy and good feeling, found a social hearth.

But the pleasing interchange of heart with heart was as short as it was grateful. The night quickly passed away, and the morning came, and with it returned the memory of the long delay of Cingotrix, whom Cormo imagined some calamity had overtaken; and this made him silent and melancholy. Nor could Octavius ward off similar forebodings, but became thoughtful and dejected, though he did not sink into the listless state of his companion, whose mind, by many long years of slavery, had been enfeebled and darkened.

The Roman tried to rouse the slave from his inertness, and to draw from him a full confession of his apprehensions respecting Cingotrix, in whose safety and return both now felt a common interest. But the only reply he could get from Cormo was : " Let us keep our patience, and hope. Cingotrix is a great chief and a brave warrior. He is wise and cautious. He has seen many battles, and often stood unharmed in the midst of the slain. Fear not. He will come perhaps with to-morrow's sun."

The morrow, however, came, and passed away as listlessly as many preceding days had done, and put further on the track of time. Meanwhile, as the autumn advanced, the hut afforded still less shelter from the rains, which were now frequently falling. And as the trees and bushes were rapidly losing their foliage, the bleak winds, from the open country, held their onward course through the forest with less and less hindrance, and blew more freely upon the frail habitation of the captives.

The withered leaves had dropped, one by one, from the branches which formed the roof; and although Cormo had partly covered these with sods of earth, and expressed his intention to close the whole in like manner, yet Octavius shuddered

at the prospect of spending the winter in this wretched abode, especially as he unknowingly magnified its rigour. "As cold as a Gallic winter," had become proverbial among the Romans; and as Britain was further north, Octavius naturally expected here still greater severity of weather.

There was, however, another consideration that disturbed the Roman much more than the thought of the suffering, which the approaching cold season might inflict upon him. He knew that Cæsar would not winter in Britain; and saw clearly that if he remained here much longer, he would lose all chance of gaining his freedom. This certainty reconciled him to the adoption of a plan which, in less adverse circumstances, would have seemed to him a hopeless task. He resolved to visit the Catte tribe if possible, and solicit from Cassibelan, of whose justice and generosity he had heard much, that the intentions of Cingotrix, even if that chief were dead, should be carried out.

To effect this object, it was necessary to gain Cormo's consent and aid; and one evening, as the slave was busy making arrows with a sharp-edged stone, which appears to have been the most primitive substitute for a knife, Octavius, resolving to disclose his plans, said: "This hut will be a poor refuge for us, Cormo, when winter comes, and

snow covers the earth. Had your tribe no better habitations for shelter from wind and rain, cold and darkness, than this comfortless hovel?"

This inquiry had the effect Octavius desired, as it brought the Briton into his most pliant humour. He immediately answered: "We had secure and warm homes in the hill-sides.* Therein we gathered round the blazing fire in the long wintry nights; our warriors told their tales of youthful bravery, and the bards sung of heroic deeds to the music of their lyres. But those joyous hours have fled away, with the spirits of those who shared them."

Here Còrmo broke off abruptly, while his melancholy countenance became suddenly animated. His ear had caught the sound of persons approaching the hut. The light of hope was for a moment again kindled in the forlorn bosom of the poor slave, — the hope that Cingotrix was near. But

* Dwelling in subterraneous pits and caves appears to have been a common practice with ancient nations, while they were in a low state of civilisation. Tacitus informs us that it was the custom of the Germans; and in this country there are many existing evidences of the practice. Caves are found in Surrey, Hertfordshire, Kent, Cornwall, and the Western Isles of Scotland; all of which exhibit proofs of having been used by the primitive inhabitants for dwellings. Some caves in Cornwall, examined by Dr. Borlase, consisted of two or three spacious apartments.

this was quickly succeeded by a fear that the blazing fire, seen through the wattled walls of the hut, might be guiding some strangers thither, and might thus lead to the discovery of his master's secret, and even to the frustration of his plan.

The anxiety of Cormo made Octavius uneasy, as he saw that the accidental visit of a stranger might any moment put his own life in peril. The suspense of both was short. The door was suddenly thrown open, and two tall men entered, and demanded a shelter for the night.

Octavius and Cormo started up; and the latter immediately recognised the strangers to be Catte chiefs, and kindred of Cingotrix, and of whom the slave eagerly sought tidings of his master. But his inquiries were unnoticed; for at that moment their gaze fell upon the Roman, and an exclamation of surprise escaped simultaneously from both the chiefs. The younger of them would have rushed impetuously upon Octavius with the long knife which he wore at his girdle, if he had not been restrained by his companion, who, with more coolness, desired first to hear from the soldier of Cæsar the cause of his lurking in this place.

The pride and courage of the Roman warrior had been roused at the entrance of these men;

and without shrinking before their menacing attitudes, Octavius referred them to their countryman for the information they desired. Cormo having satisfied their curiosity, again pressed his own inquiries, but without success. They turned from him in silence, withdrew to the threshold of the hut, and there held a short conference in a low tone. At its conclusion, they came back to the fire, and the elder said to Octavius: "Roman, you are the captive of Cassibelan, and tomorrow we will take you to his town and to his presence."

Octavius expressed his readiness to accompany them; and in the hope of eliciting some remark from the strangers, by which he might learn whether the Roman army was still in Britain, he added, he had long desired to be conducted to the great Catte chief, that he might beseech his compliance with the proposal of Cingotrix. Sudden anger flushed the countenance of both the chiefs at the last words of Octavius; and the younger exclaimed, "Cingotrix fell in battle, and many of his clan and family have perished, and the enemy—" Here a stern look from the elder Briton induced him to break off abruptly, and Octavius was thus prevented hearing the news of Cæsar's departure from Britain.

VJ

These tidings, however, would only have added to his misery, now deepened by the sudden approach of that moment which, in all probability, would decide his fate. His emotions were unobserved by the strangers, whose attention was now drawn to the frantic lamentations of Cormo. The poor slave bitterly bewailed the death of Cingotrix; and as his grief was regarded as evidence of his affection and fidelity to his late master, the chiefs deigned to bestow some notice on the unhappy Cormo. They assured him of future kind treatment; but their words carried no balm to his wounded heart, as they implied his continuance in slavery. The expectation of his freedom, so fondly cherished of late, was at once destroyed by the tidings of the chiefs; and the slave sank back into his former listless and hopeless state.

The strangers now seated themselves at the fire, having laid aside their mantles, which consisted of square pieces of cloth, fastened on the shoulder by a small splinter of wood. The form of these outer garments appears to have been originally taken from the shape of the animal's skin, the most primitive clothing of all Celtic nations, and which continued to be used long after they had become acquainted with the art of manufacturing cloth.

The first attempts of art are imitations of nature; and the earliest manufactured cloth had all the nap of the wool thrown to one side, and resembled the shaggy hair of the skin, while the other side was left smooth. The mottled variety of the skins of many animals seems to have suggested the idea of introducing different colours into the cloth; and stripes and checks, being the most easily formed, were probably first adopted.

Though the mantle of skin constituted the earliest clothing of rude men, personal comfort soon required something more; and tunics of chequered cloth, not unlike in shape to the tartan of modern days, were at this time generally worn by the wealthy British; beneath which was the *bracæ*, or trousers, that fitted close to the body, and reached to the knees. On the head a cap* of rushes was usually worn, tied at the top, and twisted into a band at the bottom.

Such was the costume of the two chiefs who had visited the hut. Neither of them was disfigured by body-painting; for as the person became more completely clothed, this custom gradually fell into disuse. The change was, however,

* A similar cap may still be seen among children in Wales and some parts of England.

slow, and confined, at this period, to the wealthy of a few southern tribes, of which the Catte was one.

Octavius watched with deep interest the varying expression of the countenances of the chiefs, as they sat enjoying the warmth of the fire, and conversing with each other in a low tone. Condidan, the elder of the two, had evidently seen sixty years, and the hardships and troubles, which are the common inheritance of a long life, had left their traces in his furrowed features; but over Segonax, the younger, twenty suns had scarcely shone. His ruddy and cheerful face indicated a mind exempt from any present anxiety, or painful recollections of the past.

The freedom and hilarity of the intercourse betwixt the father and son soon lulled the usual pride and fierceness of the warrior; and had it not been for the rude hut and different costume, Octavius might have imagined that he saw in the chiefs of a barbarian race two of his own countrymen: so little do men in domestic life, when the restraints of rank are laid aside, differ from each other; for then the endowments of our nature, common to the race, assume similar phases in every age and nation, and among all ranks of men.

Still the Roman could hardly suppress, even for a moment, the feeling that the strangers be-

fore him were foes, and too probably cruel foes, who would never unbend towards him, in the forbearing and kindlier charities of human life. And long after the chiefs had lain down for the night, did his anxious mind conjure up frightful images of human sacrifices, and anticipate the dreadful fate which seemed to await him; until his fortitude almost forsook him, and he, who had often faced death with enthusiasm on the battle-field, now, in his midnight meditations, recoiled at the thought of its icy touch.

With faint hopes of escaping from his bondage, the condition of Octavius was pitiable. From what quarter could he expect aid, consolation, or sympathy? In the dark hour of trouble he could not look for comfort from within. Little reliance could be placed on the promises given by the heathen priest to the warrior, of present succour, or of renewed life in some happier world.

The pagan land of immortality was a fiction of the poets; and the belief in its realities had little hold on the pagan mind. The divinities before whom Octavius had bowed down, and from whom he had supplicated favours, were moved by passions similar to those which actuate the human heart. The portions of good and evil in life were capriciously allotted by them; and the rewards

they had to bestow were conferred on the successful and prosperous, rather than on suffering virtue.

It is true that then, as now, men walked abroad among the beautiful scenes of nature; they gazed on the wonders of the heavens and the loveliness of the green earth. The sweet influences of the spring and summer refreshed their spirits and delighted their senses; and the fruits of autumn, while they were gracious pledges of future sustenance, kindled gratitude and joy in the hearts of the meditative.

But no clear light of an almighty Father and an overruling Providence had entered the dark chambers of the pagan mind. Amidst a multiplicity of deities, exercising different functions, the predominant feelings of the suppliant were those of doubt, vacuity, and distraction. His heart did not repose on the sustaining arm of an ever-present, all-wise, and beneficent God, overruling all for good, accomplishing his benign purposes both by the adverse, as well as by the pleasing, events of life. A conviction, so rich in consolation and hope, was not the inheritance of the Roman captive; and there needs no surprise, that he should be the victim of hopeless wretchedness.

CHAPTER II.

OCTAVIUS left the hut the next morning with great despondency ; for the stern manners of the strangers strengthened his anticipations of evil, and deprived him of the little hope he had ever had in British mercy. He felt, too, a painful restraint in their presence, as he saw he must not indulge in melancholy thoughts on his misfortunes. For the chiefs were evidently very observant of him, and would, he knew, be ready to ascribe his gravity to an unmanly fear of the future, and despise him for the cowardly heart, which that fear betrayed.

During the day Octavius made several attempts to enter into conversation with the warriors, in the hope of lessening, in some slight degree, by familiar discourse, the prejudice with which hostile strangers always regard each other. But the Britons repulsed him, in every trial, by short answers, or by a dogged silence, which, more eloquently than words could do, declared their aversion to him, and their determination to hold no communion with him that could be avoided.

Foiled in his efforts to conciliate his companions, and baffled in his endeavours to learn from them the state of the war between his countrymen and the Britons, he at length abandoned all hope of attaining either object; and, indeed, long before the close of the day, his thoughts were forcibly drawn from every consideration, but that of his bodily ailments. For, having been unused to exercise for some weeks, and having only partially recovered his strength, he soon found himself exhausted by the exertion he was obliged to make to maintain the rapid pace of his robust companions.

The state of the country also greatly augmented the fatigue of travelling. For Britain was at this period covered by vast forests, which, though sometimes broken for miles by extensive levels of heathy land, marshes, and grassy plains, were still the prevailing features of the island, clothing the sides of the hills, and extending from the possessions of one tribe to those of another.

One of these forests stretched over a space, in the south of Britain, of 150 miles; another covered a considerable part of the interior, being the seat of a large tribe called the Coritani; and, besides these, there were several others of smaller extent, but sufficiently large to contain many

towns and tribes in their recesses. It was in one of these lesser ones that the travellers were now journeying.

Cultivation was limited to small spots, far apart from each other, and to be found chiefly among a few of the more southern tribes. At this period no means of communication existed between the towns of a tribe, except narrow winding paths,* tracked through the forests and over the hills and plains. No bridges spanned the rivers, which, impeded by fallen trees, frequently overflowed their banks in the winter season, and formed extensive sheets of water.

Although the day began to decline, and the grey light of a late autumnal evening drew on, the travellers gave no sign of halting for the night.

* Sir R. C. Hoare and Mr. Cunnington ascertained the existence of "covered ways or lines of communication from one British town to another." These ancient British roads appear, from the description of them given by Hoare, to have consisted of two parallel embankments, between which lay an entrenchment, and which was the covered way or road of the Britons. It was not paved like the Roman roads, but had for "its basis the verdant turf." The line of the embankments marked the course of the track-way across grassy plains, through the wooded districts, and along the sides of the hills. These roads would connect together only the towns of one people, and not those of different tribes, between whom there was probably no lasting amity, but frequent disputes and wars.

Octavius cast a despairing eye over the dreary country, but could descry no trace of a human habitation; and yet he felt that food and rest were becoming indispensable to him, as he had not recovered his usual health and strength. The thought of appearing before Cassibelan in his present exhausted state harassed his mind; and as he and his companions journeyed on by the skirt of the forest, he threw many a look into its gloomy recesses in search of hollow trunks of ancient trees, in which shelter might be found at least for a few hours. But a better refuge was at hand.

The Britons had taken very little notice of him during the latter part of the day, and did not appear to observe the weary step with which he followed them. Towards evening they came to the side of a hill covered with low underwood; and here they halted at a spot where a few stones and withered bushes lay heaped together. To the eye of the Roman these seemed the accidental accumulations of time; but to the Britons they were landmarks which pointed out a place of shelter for the night, and the removal of them disclosed a low cave. The travellers sat down at the entrance to make a scanty meal of food, which they had brought from the hut. Cormo, unob-

served by the chiefs, put his share into the hands of the Roman, and at the same time made a sign to him significant of his desire for silence. When all, except the generous slave, had slightly refreshed themselves, they entered the cave; and, after Corno had closed up the entrance, the party lay down in silence and darkness to take a few hours' rest.

The slave had spoken very seldom during the day, especially to Octavius; but now, free from the observation of the chiefs, he crept to the Roman, and whispered in his ear a word of sympathy. He next wrapped up the weary feet of Octavius in part of his own garment, and then lay down, and soon fell himself into a profound slumber, enjoying the complacent feeling which an act of kindness ever produces in him who confers it. Octavius too, soothed and cheered by these touching proofs of the lively affection of this lowly man, and especially by the last service, was not long awake; and the restorative influences of sound sleep nerved him with new strength to support the fatigues and anxieties of the ensuing day.

Although a dense fog enveloped every object in its vapoury mantle the next morning, the Britons set out on their journey over an untracked country, with no fear of wandering from their

direct course. For the inhabitants of wild lands are so observant of every object, that the form of a tree or bush, the course of a stream, or the undulations of the country, are sufficient guides for them.

As the fog gradually cleared away, they left the moorland, over which they had been travelling, and entered the forest again. And here, though no trackway existed, the Britons pressed on without a pause through brier and brake, though woodland travelling at this period was laborious and perplexing; for the trees, which the hand of man had neither planted nor cultivated, grew up in wild luxuriance; and while their branches were so interlaced above head as to produce a shade at noon, resembling the dimness of twilight, the dense underwood and tall tangled grass beneath the feet incessantly impeded the progress of the traveller, and increased his fatigue.

A solemn silence dwelt in these primeval woods, broken only by the notes of the feathered tribe, and more particularly by those huge forest birds that have long since disappeared, or by the discordant cries of savage animals. For at this period the wild boar roamed over the island, and the ferocious wolf lurked in every thicket; and dangers now unknown beset the path of the traveller.

These dangers were, however, little regarded by the fearless natives; and served only to renew in the minds of the chiefs the remembrance, and led them to speak, of past exploits and daring adventures. Although the conversation was confined to the two chiefs, yet as they often cast a look on Octavius, it was evident that they were not unmindful of his presence; and though they might hate him as an enemy, they were not wholly indifferent to his opinion.

Towards evening they emerged from the forest; but not again on a dreary waste, for here, in one of those open tracts which so often break the continuity of forest land, lay the town of Cassibelan.* It was sheltered on three sides by the woods, and

* The locality of this place is uncertain; but historians have generally fixed it near or on the site which was subsequently occupied by the Roman Verulam, and not far from the present town of St. Alban's. The Catte are often called Cassi by ancient writers; and as the hundred in which St. Alban's is situated is still called Cassio, the inference seems probable, that the chief town of the tribe was situated somewhere in this district. As the real name of this ancient place is unknown, I have adopted the British term Ver, which the stream that flows near it bears to this day; and this appellation seems preferable to that of Verulam, used by Latin writers; a name which it certainly did not bear for upwards of a century after the period which these pages illustrate. The Romans were much in the habit, by prefixes and affixes, of Latinising the names of towns, rivers, and other objects,

open only to the south. A rampart of earth and a ditch surrounded the place, which was an assemblage of rude buildings irregularly disposed according to the fancy of the occupiers.

The groups of trees, the scattered bushes, the folds of sheep, the cattle grazing about, the broken and irregular surface of the ground, at once shewed the town and neighbourhood to be the residence of a rude and simple people, whose desires were few, and whose conveniences and comforts were bounded by the narrow limits of an incipient civilisation.

The inhabitants passed the greater part of the day in the open air. Some were now stretched on the ground, gazing on the heavens above with the vacant look of the rude and untaught mind. Others were loitering in groups, engaged in conversation. Young men were running races; and the children of all classes were mingled together without distinction, busy in the noisy sports which appertained to their age.

A merry troop gambled after the travellers, who had now passed the boundaries of the town,

rather than wholly changing them; and as Ver is contained in Verulam, it appears plausible that the real name of the ancient British town did not differ materially, if at all, from that given to it in these pages.

attracted by the strange dress of the Roman, which, though much disfigured by the disasters he had suffered, had yet sufficient of its foreign character to arrest the attention of both young and old. It consisted of a saic,* or mantle of fine cloth, fastened down the front with clasps, beneath which appeared the scarlet tunic of the same material, and the sandaled feet, which were all novelties among the Catte, and which greatly excited their curiosity, and brought so many about them as to hinder the progress of the travellers on their way to the residence of Cassibelan.

Condidan, however, rebuked these interrogators with a grave dignity, which bespoke his authority and rank in the tribe, and proceeded on with his captive. But Segonax was as ready to communicate, as others were to hear, the history of the stranger; and loitering behind his father, he was soon surrounded by a crowd of listeners.

Cormo, who still clung to his almost forlorn hope of freedom, was in no mood to be drawn aside like the young chieftain. He followed Condidan and Octavius, thinking, with trembling apprehension, alternately on his own future lot, and then on that of the friendless stranger.

The Roman, with the painful feeling of one

* Celtic word for skin or hide, called by the Romans *sagum*.

who knows his life to be in imminent peril, looked anxiously about for the dwelling of the far-famed Cassibelan, which he fancied might easily be distinguished from other habitations by its superior appearance. He observed that the houses were much larger, and more substantially built than the forest hut; and though formed of stakes driven into the ground, and wattled together, yet, as the interstices were well filled up with clay, would certainly be much warmer.

The roofs, composed of rushes, were high and conical; and from an opening in the centre, smoke was issuing from the blazing fire, about which, as they passed many an open doorway, females were seen busily preparing the evening meal. Although



these were signs of comfort to the weary and hungry traveller, where a welcome was sure, yet they could give little pleasure to the desponding captive.

A few houses, from their greater size than the rest, and from having been washed over externally with chalk, had a more cleanly and comfortable aspect; and into the most distinguished of these Condidan walked without hesitation, commanding his companions to follow him. In these primitive times, when the slave and his master lay down at night on the same rushy floor for repose, little ceremony was observed between different ranks. A chief's abode was entered with almost as much freedom as the meanest of his followers; and in the internal appearance of either home, there was little else than the dimensions to distinguish the one from the other.

Around on the walls of the warrior's home were arranged his arms, and those of his forefathers,—“the spoils of his enemies, and the gifts of his friends;” and these were the only ornaments and articles of value in a British dwelling. The furniture was limited to a few benches, and a scanty supply of domestic utensils. Here the leader of a tribe, or the head of a clan, would sit, when the pursuits of the day were over, surrounded by his

family and dependents, enjoying at intervals the only intellectual pleasure with which he was acquainted, the songs and historic tales of the Bards.

In this manner sat Cassibelan, on a bench near the fire, with the venerable Oscar, the bard of his household, on his left hand, and Casbar, the sternest and most powerful Druid of the district, on his right. Octavius required no interpreter to explain the group before him. The rude lyre and placid aspect of the one bespoke his occupation as a son of song; while the unbending austerity, the profound gravity, and the rigid expression of the whole features of the other, as clearly revealed to the Roman, that he saw before him one of the far-famed sages of Britain. And both presented an appearance wholly unlike that of the man by whom they sat, the warrior chief of the Catte.

Cassibelan, though he had passed the prime of life, was still in possession of a robust and vigorous frame. Authority sat upon his countenance, and the power to maintain that authority was strongly exhibited in the fine proportions of his muscular form. Octavius could not doubt his being in the presence of the arbiter of his future lot; and he waited, with breathless anxiety, for the recognition of himself. His suspense was but momentary. An exclamation of astonishment burst

from the lips of the Catte leader immediately on seeing under his own roof a Roman. He hastily arose from his seat, and grasped his spear with the quickness of a man ever ready for combat:

The companions of the king, though they shared his surprise, betrayed no outward symptom of it. For all classes of Druids carefully suppressed every visible emotion. Even Cassibelan rarely disclosed his feelings so openly as he had just done. He, however, very quickly regained his usual self-command, and resuming his seat, gravely demanded of the chief, where, and in what circumstances, he had met his strange companion?

Condidan very briefly replied by relating his accidental discovery of the Roman in the forest hut; and then ordered Cormo to repeat to the king the particulars of the charge, with which his late master had entrusted him.

The slave obeyed; but before he began, he walked three times round Cassibelan and his companions. This ceremony was called the *Deiseal*;

* ‘*Deiseal*,’ written by some authors ‘*dessil*,’ by others ‘*deisol*,’ from *deas* or *dess*, right hand, and *soil* or *sul*, the sun, was a religious ceremony, but not exclusively so. It was used also as a token of civil honour or respect paid to a superior or distinguished person. Homer mentions its performance as a mark of respect to the dead body of Patroclus. Martin, in his account of the Western Isles of Scotland, mentions the practice of going three

and though properly a religious observance, it was also used in early times as an act of respect and homage to a superior. After this ceremony, Cormo told his brief tale with the artlessness of truth, and with the earnestness of one whose last hope lay in its favourable reception.

Octavius meanwhile watched the countenance of Cassibelan with tremulous anxiety ; but received no encouragement to hope for favour. His features did not relax from the expression they had assumed on the first sight of himself. The king kept a fixed and searching eye on Cormo to the end of his story, on which he made no comment, except to signify that he was satisfied with the slave's conduct.

A long pause succeeded, and not even a whisper passed from one to another of the numerous household. All had now become aware, that one of that new race of foes was before them who had so lately sacked their town, and despoiled many of their little wealth ; and others of that which was dearer than wealth, their friends and kindred.

times round a person, with the right hand towards him ; and the custom is still continued in these Isles, and probably in many other remote districts. In all ages and nations the postures of the body have been associated with religious worship and reverence, and used also as signs of civil respect to superiors.

Whilst the king and chief Druid were privately deliberating on the disposal of the captive, the family and dependents of Cassibelan were striving to gratify their curiosity, by eagerly gazing at Octavius, who, hungry, weary, and wretched, was struggling to conceal the faintness of a sinking frame, and the anxiety of a despondent heart, under an appearance of a firm and unruffled spirit.

Cormo, secretly wishing to conciliate the king towards the Roman, had mentioned, at the close of his recital, the strong desire of Octavius to be conducted to the presence of the great Cassibelan.

This remark evidently gratified the warrior, whose first inquiry of the captive was, why he had desired an interview with him ?

Being anxious to soften every harsh feeling which existed in the Catte towards himself, Octavius answered in the most courteous words he could command : " Noble Briton, I have long desired to come before you to plead my misfortunes, because I have ever found that generosity and honour dwell with the brave ; and to the great warrior of the Catte tribe I believed I might look for the fulfilment of my captor's intentions."

" Roman," replied Cassibelan, in a more gracious tone than Octavius had hoped to hear from him, " your chief has entered into a treaty of

peace with the tribes of Britain; and he and his warriors have gone away over the great waters to their own country."

Cassibelan, as he spoke, looked steadily on Octavius, to observe how he would receive the tidings of Cæsar's departure from Britain, of which it was evident he had been, up to this moment, wholly ignorant. Happily for the Roman, his self-possession did not forsake him in this trying emergency. He concealed the despair which these words carried to his heart, and resolved not to cast away the only chance which might remain of securing generous treatment from his enemies, by commanding their respect for his fortitude and boldness. He knew that the brave will often pity the brave in the midst of his misfortune; and this sentiment enabled him to maintain his courage and equanimity of mind. He saw that if he would gain the sympathy of Cassibelan, it was necessary that he should shew his high regard for those virtues, which were most esteemed by this rude chieftain.

Meanwhile the tendency of the flattering words which he had himself addressed to the king, was not unnoticed by Casbar the Druid. He alone fully knew the mortification which Cassibelan had endured, caused by the brief success of the Ro-

mans, and how great was his exasperation against them; and quickly saw the secret pleasure which the defeated warrior felt on discovering, that even these skilful and powerful foes acknowledged and respected his own high character. To check any feeling of compassion which might arise in the generous-hearted Cassibelan towards the insidious Roman, and to bring back the former bitter and revengeful feelings of the Catte warrior, the Druid resolved himself to address this bold pleader.

“Roman, a brave and prudent man would never approach the blood-stained homes of his captors to ask for liberty and life. You have betrayed an unmanly fear of death in seeking to soften the anger of Cassibelan; and yet you would fain be ranked among the brave who know no fear.”

Although this short speech was delivered with much calmness, it was easy to detect a degree of bitterness and contempt in the Druid's manner and words. Octavius saw the position in which the Druid sought to place him with the Catte; and to repel the insinuation of a craven spirit, he replied in a respectful but firm tone:

“Holy father, though life is sweet to every heart, it is the coward only who shrinks from its last dark hour. Arms have been my pastime from my youth, and I have spent many years amidst

the dangers of war ; and as I have in all past times faced them without fear, I will meet them in the future without reproach."

Casbar made no reply ; for a Druid never condescended to dispute with the people, and still less would he do so with a captive. The Druid, moreover, well knew, that eventually not even Cassibellan would presume to oppose his views, regarding the final disposal of the prisoner.

The Cattle leader was also silent for a few moments, perplexed by a feeling of respect, which had been suddenly awakened in his mind for the Roman, and his bitter hatred of a people who had proved such powerful and terrible foes. After a little hesitation, he determined to defer further consideration of the fate of the prisoner to another time, and for the present to confide him to the care of Condidan. Remembering that Cormo was also at his disposal, he commanded the slave henceforth to regard this chief as his master.

Cormo, condemned to suffer the continuance of his unpitied wrongs, silently obeyed with a broken spirit ; and with weary feet, but far more weary hearts, the Roman captive and the British slave, preceded by their common master, took their way to his abode, which they soon reached. It was similar in size and in its rude decorations

of arms on the walls to the one they had just quitted, and contained also the same scanty furniture.

An aged man, the father of Condidan, sat on a skin near the central fire, warming his feet and withered hands, and watching with a dim eye the preparations for the evening meal. Several women were busied about the fire; but there was one, to whom Condidan spoke, who most attracted the attention of Octavius. She was the mistress of the dwelling; and upon that person how much of the happiness of every inmate depends! Though belonging to a rude race, her appearance was prepossessing, and her dress not ungraceful. She was clothed in a tunic of cloth, plaited in full folds round the waist, and which fell nearly to her feet; and over this she wore a robe of coarse stuff, fastened by a fibula* of bronze. Care, rather than time, had tinged her hair with a silvery hue; and its long tresses shaded a melancholy, but pleasing countenance.

"Malvina," said the chief, as he entered the dwelling, "I have brought to our hearth and home a strange guest. Cassibelan desires that we should give him shelter and food for a time. He is hungry and weary, and must have refreshment. Let

* The brooch of the ancient Britons.

Cassibelan's wishes be obeyed now, and we shall know more by and bye."

Malvina seemed to hesitate, and murmured some complaint on being requested to afford hospitality to a Roman foe; but a slight remonstrance from Condidan, and her womanly feelings, which were soon called forth, after looking for a few moments on the pale and weary Octavius, gave a new turn to her thoughts; and she quietly directed her attention to the wants of her new guest.

A skin was spread for the repose of Octavius; and his exhausted spirits were soon relieved by refreshment. Nevertheless he felt himself more lonely and comfortless in this warm and plentiful dwelling, though surrounded by a number of persons, than he had ever done in the cheerless and empty forest-hut, with scanty food, and only one companion. For he knew himself to be homeless in this chieftain's home. He was a hated stranger and a war-captive; and his sojourn here, and even in life, would probably be brief; and between himself and all about him, there stood a barrier which he could not hope to remove.

It is in an unsympathising crowd that a sense of loneliness most weighs upon the heart. To hear the friendly word and see the kindly smile given to others, and be denied all participation in them,

is one of the most depressing evils that "flesh is heir to." Even the thoughtful attentions of Cormo could not in this place cheer the dejected Octavius.

The slave brought water, the first welcome of primitive times, for the wearied feet of the captive; and having washed and wrapped them up in part of the skin on which he rested, hastened to minister other comforts. But no attention could reach the repining spirit. The Roman, believing himself one of the most wretched of men, lay down and closed his eyes on the noisy and inquisitive company, refusing to be comforted even by his kind friend, on whom the hand of adversity pressed as heavily as on himself; but who, through many long years, had borne the heavy burden with patience and humility.

CHAPTER III.

IN describing the ancient British period, it is desirable to advert to the earliest probable condition of the Britons. The first inhabitants that reached the shores of this island, we may well suppose to have been wandering tribes, who had been gradually driven westward by other streams of the human family that were frequently flowing from the East. These adventurers, it is natural to imagine, were then in that semi-savage state into which sections of our race seem to have lapsed, when allured either by love of adventure, or dispersed by discord, strife, and war ; or compelled by their crimes to go forth as wanderers or outcasts into the wilderness of uninhabited lands. For there, amid rugged wastes and sterile spots, they would necessarily suffer the deprivation of most of the comforts and advantages enjoyed by groups of men long united, and would naturally by degrees fall into ignorance, rudeness, and various grades of savage life, which is not, indeed, as some have supposed, the normal condition of man. Hence it is incorrect to call civilised life an artificial state.

Man is necessarily a social being by original endowments, and, viewed in totality, is always in progress "from good to better." Hence his true position is one in which he can best develop all the physical, mental, and moral powers with which he is gifted. The earliest races of which we have any historical account had made considerable advances in civilisation. They dwelt in communities, were acquainted with many of the most useful arts, and had surrounded themselves with social comforts.

The primitive form of society was no doubt the most simple; one in which the head of a family was its only ruler and priest. In this state there would be no social distinctions, except those which age and wisdom conferred. But this condition of society would only continue while branches of the family were few in number. In two or three generations, the descendants of each respective parent stem, though related by the ties of consanguinity, would become distinct clans. And as authority and subjection are elements which spring naturally from any collective body of human beings, the person most distinguished for knowledge and skill and physical strength would ultimately gain the ascendancy, and become eventually the chief of the clan.

On emergencies, when unanimity of action was

necessary, the chiefs of these clans would select from among them one who, on account of his talents, was best qualified for the office of general leader. Hence the title and rank of supreme chief or king* sprung from the possession and

* The title of king has been given in these pages to the principal chief of a tribe, as it seemed unnecessary to depart from the practice of historians. The term leader, however, is more appropriate, as being more significant of the rank and functions of one commonly called king among the Celts. Cæsar affirms that the authority of kings among the Germans was limited to the season of war, and probably did not extend beyond the bounds of military affairs; and that, in time of peace, government merged wholly into the patriarchal practice. A similar usage prevailed among the Britons. For whatever power was vested in the principal chief during war, as soon as peace was restored, the Druid resumed his accustomed supreme rule over both chief and people. Many writers, in describing the usages of remote times, speak in a desultory manner of kings being crowned, and seated on thrones; but this phraseology is inappropriate to the chieftain of a simple and rude people, among whom these appendages to leadership were certainly unknown. Whether, in these distant ages, the supreme chiefs enjoyed any revenue besides that which they, in common with other chiefs, derived from their land or cattle, is uncertain. Cæsar's assertion, that the Druids were exempt from taxes, seems to imply that some at least were exacted of the people; but all other historians, and also tradition, are silent on this subject. It is not unlikely that Cæsar was in an error, and that the taxes of which he speaks were the tributes which were brought, at stated seasons, to the temple; and it is probable that there existed no other imposts than these in the British community, except that of military service.

exercise of superior mental and physical qualities; and while the office was dependent alone on these distinctions, it would necessarily be elective. A union of several clans formed a tribe, and in process of time the union of various tribes formed a nation.

The office of priest would spring from different qualities. As the age, wisdom, and piety of the patriarch gave rise to a feeling of deference and reverence in others, and rendered him the most fitting person to prescribe and conduct the sacred services of religion, so those who were distinguished by similar qualities, when men had departed from the simple patriarchal times, would naturally fill the office of spiritual leader. In this manner arose the two great powers always found in human society — the kingly and the priestly.

The exercise of the priestly office in ancient times induced peaceful habits, and led to frequent meditation among the wild and lonely scenes of nature. Alternate solitude spent in studious thought and familiar intercourse with their fellow beings in their various pursuits and pastimes, made the priest an investigator of human character; and he very early discovered that the great secret of obtaining the most abiding and powerful authority and rule over the destinies of men is, the having

a profound acquaintance with the influences which most strongly excite and control their sentiments and passions. The Druids had obtained this knowledge in a pre-eminent degree, and had become the legislators of British society, the administrators of the laws, the guardians of public and private peace; and their advice often prevailed even in councils of war. On the other hand, the kings of the ancient Britons were warlike leaders and not civil rulers, and exercised in times of peace very little power beyond their own family or clan.

The authority of the Druids was more extensive and influential than that of the civil ruler. They ruled in the souls of men, and excited or controlled their inmost desires at their pleasure. Ignorance and credulity allowed them the exercise of a power unearthly, and derived, as was believed, from the gods, by which they fashioned the very hearts of men at their discretion. But little or no sacredness had as yet gathered round the kingly power, which was an object of fear only, not of reverence, and could be disobeyed or resisted as often as interest or passion might incite, provided it could be done with the hope of impunity; but from the power of the Druids there was no escape.

Various gradations of rank existed even in the earliest nations, and among none more than

among the ancient Britons. The clan chiefs were the aristocracy, or nobility of the state ; and their wealthier followers or retainers, who were also their kinsfolk, constituted a middle rank in the community, while the slaves formed the lowest section in the social compact.

Between none of these, however, did there exist any very distinct line of demarcation. The Druids were the only class who, by means of their sacred office and mental superiority, invariably preserved their high rank in society, and who retained, from age to age, their influence undiminished, their privileges unquestioned.

The frequently occurring privations, and the simple habits of this era, brought all other orders of men into frequent intimacy and dependence on each other ; and the chances of war, which might often rend asunder the chains of the slave, and cast down the chief into bondage, make the rich poor, and the poor rich, admitted not of any permanency in the adventitious distinctions with which men were sometimes invested.

Though the form of British society approached that of a civilised nation, yet the most powerful civilising agency was wanted, and without which national improvement makes little or no progress. Commerce alternately creates wants, and brings

in its train a constantly increasing number of social comforts, and an accumulation of national wealth. It gives polish to private and public manners, and encourages and advances the fine arts; and by means of the industrious habits which it necessarily calls forth, it promotes individual and general happiness.

The Britons had very little commerce or trade, except in a few simple transactions of barter among themselves. Their slaves and the poorer women tilled small parcels of ground, which was but rudely cultivated, and had the care of the herds and flocks.

Chieftains and their warlike followers considered all labour as beneath their dignity; and vestiges of this opinion linger yet in civilised nations. A life of idleness is still regarded by many as desirable and honourable; and to this vain and false notion men of all ages sacrifice frequently their virtue and happiness.

Notwithstanding the anxieties and perils of his present situation, Octavius, from fatigue and exhaustion, slept through the long night as soundly as any of the inmates of Condidan's dwelling. But he awoke early in the morning with painful anticipations of the future. From the heavy breathing of all around, he conjectured that he

alone was awake; and sitting up, he looked on the sleeping household with curiosity.

The day had just dawned, and the aperture in the roof admitted sufficient light to render the slumberers visible. They all lay upon the rushy floor with their feet towards the fire, dressed in their usual clothes, with the mantle thrown loosely over the person, and which distinguished the members of the family from Cormo and three other slaves, who had nothing upon them but the garment of skin which they wore during the day. Cloth was a luxury even among the rich, who were often clothed in skins like their dependents, and from whom they were distinguished simply by the greater number of articles which constituted their dress; while the clothing of the humble classes consisted only of the rude mantle of skin,—the first covering which the wants of men led them to adopt.

Octavius looked earnestly upon this British family, desiring to read in the lineaments of their countenances their dispositions, in order, if possible, to form some conjecture as to the nature of his future treatment. His scrutiny, however, was soon brought to a close, as the hour of rising had come with the break of day; and the whole family were consequently soon awake and astir.

The male portion of the household went out into the open air; the chiefs to escape from the atmosphere of the long-closed dwelling, and the slaves to look after the cattle; while the women remained within to discharge their early domestic duties.

Before Condidan left the house, he came to the side of Octavius; but supposing him to be still asleep, he walked away without disturbing him. Octavius had lain down again at the first sign of the household's awakening, and closed his eyes, anxious to defer any intercourse with the family, as long as he was able. For he could hope for no relief to his troubled mind in conversing with strangers and enemies, who would secretly rejoice over his sufferings, and probably try to prolong, rather than mitigate them. But he could not long feign sleep, as he soon found that he was an object of curiosity to the whole household. He therefore opened his eyes, and on looking up, saw three women leaning over him, who immediately drew back a little, on finding that they too were observed.

The one nearest to him he immediately recognised to be Malvina, whom, from Condidan's manner of addressing on the previous evening, he had judged to be the mistress of the house, and now concluded her to be the mother of the fair girl

who stood beside her, and who was her youthful image. The other woman was very unlike either of her companions: affliction, rather than age, had rendered her features pallid and rigid; and while her countenance indicated sorrow to be the prevailing tone of her mind, her long black garment gave a solemn aspect to her whole appearance.

Octavius readily conjectured, from the fierce and angry look with which she viewed him, that she must be one who was suffering deeply from the evils of the late war. His supposition was correct. The Roman invasion had made her a childless woman; for in the battle-strife with Cæsar's army, she not only lost her husband, but also her last son. These heavy misfortunes increased the austerity which her peculiar avocations had long created and fostered; for, as her dress denoted, she was a Druidess of that class whose temple-duties were not incompatible with those of a domestic nature. Perhaps familiarity with the bleeding sacrifice had some hardening influence on her character. But whether it were so or not, female devotees were all distinguished by a severity of manners which separated them from the rest of their sex, whose less honoured and more laborious employments kept them humble and submissive in demeanour.

Malvina was the first to speak, and though her inquiries were urged only by that compassion which the humane always feel even for a foe, when friendless and suffering, yet Octavius felt for the moment encouraged to hope for better treatment than he had just before been anticipating.

He attempted to rise, but the two days' travel, in his weak condition, had made his limbs stiff and painful; and his bodily fatigue, together with the extreme anxiety of his mind, had brought on a low fever, which now rendered him almost helpless. He sunk down again on his rushy bed, whilst an involuntary murmur escaped his lips. Malvina was so moved by this piteous state to which a brave warrior was reduced, that, to cheer her sick and suffering guest, she gave utterance to a few kind words, which were, however, abruptly checked by her morose companion, as they turned away together, on the entrance of the chief of the family.

Condidan immediately approached and accosted Octavius with less harshness than he had ever done before, and seemed, for the present, to have sunk the character of the warrior-foe in that of a somewhat friendly-disposed host. But these symptoms of a greater humanity among the Britons than Oc-

tavius had expected, cheered him only a few moments. His judgment quickly corrected any momentary delusive feelings which might spring up within him. He knew that all kindness from a rude tribe to an enemy like himself must be evanescent, and would last no longer than his suffering and helpless state might extort it. His thoughts again reverted to those cruel tortures and that violent death, to which he knew a war-captive was commonly subjected.

As all hope again forsook him, he sat up, with very little inclination to partake of the hospitality which was offered him. The morning meal consisted of a little milk and a piece of boiled meat, doled out to each person according to his rank. No other ceremony or distinction was observed among the different inmates of the dwelling, except that the slaves kept at a greater distance than other members of the family from that place of comfort and honour in a British abode, the central fire. According to the early custom of primitive nations, every British home contained two or three families, consisting of aged parents, married sons and their families, and unmarried daughters. In most homes there were three, and sometimes four, generations. Lathmon, the aged man whom Octavius had noticed on the previous

evening, had long been too infirm to act as the leader of his clan, or even as chief of his own immediate household.

These duties had devolved on Condidan, the eldest son, whose family consisted only of Malvina and a son and daughter. The Druidess was the only member left of the family of Lathmon's second son. The old man's daughters had all married and left the paternal home ; and there were therefore no other inmates of this British dwelling than those just mentioned, Cormo and three other slaves, and the bard of Condidan's clan.

In these ancient days a bard was an indispensable member of a clan, and dwelt in the home of the great chieftain of that clan, and to whom he was probably always related. It was the bard's vocation to act as historian, or as a kind of "poet laureat" to the family and clan with which he was connected, by rehearsing, from time to time, their successes in the chase or in war, and the defeat of their enemies.

A bard belonged to the lowest class of Druids, the next in rank were the Faids, who were the sacred musicians of the temple, and the diviners and predictors of future events. The last and highest were the priests, who bore the name of the whole order, being expressly called the Druids,

who were the most feared and revered by the people, particularly the elders, from whom was chosen the chief or Archdruid, who was the head of this mystic and powerful hierarchy.

As each person finished his repast, he left the house to proceed to his usual occupation. The slaves went to their duties of tending the cattle and sheep, or to labour in the adjoining sheds; and thus they passed their day, until the waning light brought a cessation of their toils.

Condidan and Segonax went forth, with other chieftains of the town, either to exercise their horses in the war-chariots, a training to which they were often subjected; to hunt in the neighbouring woods; or to go in search of the scattered herds and flocks, which had been dispersed through the forest on the sacking of their town by the Romans. The Cattle were anxious to gather together as many of the wild cattle and sheep as they could capture, into the town, before the severity of winter drove the ravenous wolves from their distant haunts into the adjacent woodlands.

The bard withdrew from the house and the little busy world without it, to some sequestered haunt in the forest, where alone, or in company with some one or more of his brethren, he had spent many days of past years in contemplating

the beauties of nature, and in gathering up, from the scenes of the vast and lonely wilderness, those stores of imagery which enrich the imagination, and which, together with the silent communings of a man's own heart, contribute largely to the education of the true poet.

Lathmon took his usual seat on a log of wood outside the door, to beguile away the monotonous hours of old age as he best could. To watch the youth of the town at their pastimes, or to exchange a few words with every loiterer, were the only remaining sources of amusement to the once active huntsman and proud warrior.

Old age, in early times, might well be called "unlovely and dark;" for it was a period of bodily helplessness and dreary vacuity of mind. Being no longer able to take a share in the exhilarating pursuits of the chase, or in the enthusiastic scenes of war, the aged man was left to himself; and when he entered the chamber of his own thoughts, he found there only feeble and indistinct reminiscences of past events, in which he no longer felt any interest; or if he attempted to look into the future, that future was hidden from him by an impenetrable cloud. Hope he no doubt did for a better destiny; but that hope did not spring from a knowledge of the true character of the great

Author of all, nor from an acquaintance with his purposes, nor from any comprehension of the nobleness of his own inward nature; but rested on the simple affirmative of the Druid priest. Hence it was unstable, took little hold of the heart, and could impart but small comfort amidst the darkness and desolateness of a mind which had been mainly employed in the affairs of hunting, savage warfare, and rude animal enjoyments.

All the knowledge of this period was the exclusive property of the priest and philosopher, and about which even the chieftain gave himself no concern. Hence, when the evening of life came, he had no resources, no light from within to cheer the last days of earthly being. It is from this condition of mind, together with the infirmities of age, that a second childhood commonly results, without the sportive and happy charms of the first, but with all its feebleness, and attended with a spirit of listlessness, discontent, and despondency, which increase with the failing strength of the worn-out tenement.

The Druidess departed to her temple duties, and Malvina, with her daughter and a female slave, sat down to their rude needlework of sewing skins together, with leathern thongs and bone needles, for winter garments for the family. In

this employment, or in the lighter one of spinning or weaving, British females spent that portion of the day which was not required for the performance of other domestic duties, or for out-door labour.

Octavius, feverish and weary, continued to lie on the rushy floor the whole of the day; and, as this interval of repose and peace contributed greatly to restore his lost strength, he was better prepared for a second interview with the king. Towards evening Cassibelan entered the house with Condidan, on their return from the chase; and Octavius, knowing that bodily weakness would not recommend him to British warriors, was glad to find that he was able to rise quickly to his feet, and receive Cassibelan with the respect due to his rank.

The king looked earnestly at him before he spoke, being curious to know how one of these extraordinary warriors bore his misfortune. Observing, in the pale but composed countenance of the captive, no sign of mental anxiety, he felt inclined to regard the Roman as a brave man, though an enemy; and with a courtesy which did honour to his rude nature, he desired Octavius to take a place next him on the bench, on which he had himself just sat down.

Before the appearance of Cæsar in this island, Cassibelan had considered himself the greatest warrior of his day; but the Roman campaign convinced him that he had to contend with a warrior of greater experience in the tactics of war, and by whom he was surpassed in skill, though not in courage. The pride of the British hero had been wounded; and he felt it not the less by being obliged to conceal his mortifications even from his most intimate companions. But, if he secretly rejoiced in the opportunity which he now had of avenging himself on a Roman for the losses he had sustained by Cæsar, he deferred the gratification of doing so, until he should have gathered all the information which the prisoner could give of the Roman system of warfare; and to this object he now directed his conversation.

Octavius, eager to know the extent and nature of the perils and sufferings which might await him, endeavoured more than once to turn the conversation towards his own situation. The king, however, adroitly evaded these inferential allusions, and kept his own object steadily in view. And when he quitted the house, he designedly left the Roman in the same state of suspense in which he had found him.

Octavius, being thus thrown back into that

state of anxiety which, like a "worm i' the bud," preys on the heart, until certainty, however terrible, becomes a welcome relief, speedily sunk into his former despondency, from which he had been roused for a short time. He was no longer the proud and dauntless Roman, but the poor dejected man, who had retired into the woe of his own heart, where dwelt the demons of darkness and hopelessness. He knew of no future good, and scarcely dared to hope for any, but in the preservation of this life; for over that, which the priest said would be hereafter, hung "clouds and darkness." Beyond death he saw rather the long gloomy night of annihilation, than the golden streaks of the opening day of a new and happier life.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING the first few days of Octavius's sojourn among the Catte, he heard much of the want and misery occasioned by the ravages made by his countrymen in the sacking of Ver, their chief town; an event which had occurred while he lay a wounded captive in the forest hut.

At the time the Romans entered Ver, it was filled with cattle and sheep, the chief wealth of the tribe. Here also, as the most secure place, were collected the aged men, women, and children, whom the warriors left behind, while they went forth on the war-path with their leader. The appearance of the invading army was a signal for the dispersion of the people into the neighbouring forest; the old warriors not thinking any defence practicable against so powerful a host. The Romans, in consequence, took possession of the town, and of whatever plunder they pleased, without resistance, and withdrew at their leisure, leaving behind them a name the more odious, as they had despoiled the sanctuary of home. The remem-

brance of this direful event bitterly humbled the pride of the Catte, and excited hatred of the Roman, equalled only by their implacability towards the Trinobantes,* who had guided the plunderers to the town.

Betwixt these two tribes a spirit of animosity had long existed; and a short time before Cæsar's invasion, Immanuentis, the king of the Trinobantes, had fallen by the hand of Cassibelan, in a battle fought between these respective people. Mandubrace, the son of the Trinobante king, fled to Gaul, where, falling in with the Romans, he took refuge in their camp, and was brought with them to Britain.

The Trinobantes, being at first ignorant of the asylum their young chief had found, united with the other British tribes in opposing the Romans, on the ground of their appearance on the coast as new and powerful enemies. But when they learned that Mandubrace accompanied these warlike foes, they broke off from their alliance with the other British tribes, and entered into a friendly negotiation with the Romans. As they were anxious to release Mandubrace, who was detained in the invader's army from prudential motives, the Trino-

* A British tribe, who occupied the district now called Middlesex.

bantes agreed to guide the Romans to Cassibelan's town; and as a recompense for this service, the son of their late king was restored to them as their future leader.

After Octavius had learned the extent of the evils endured by the Catte in the late struggle with his countrymen, his apprehensions of speedily becoming the victim of their revenge were much increased. But to his great surprise, days and even weeks passed in succession, yet no change took place in his situation. This delay, though it both harassed and perplexed him, gave birth to a feeble hope that, by some happy chance, he might escape the two greatest evils of a war-captive—slavery or death.

Meanwhile, as health returned, his morbid feelings were succeeded by a resigned and even a cheerful tone of mind; and he began occasionally to enjoy those simple pleasures, which even a poor captive may find, if he rightly seek them. As he became better acquainted with the Britons, his confidence in their humanity increased; and he no longer regarded them as altogether a nation of merely fierce savages.

Octavius, in common with his countrymen, had been led to this opinion of the Britons from their appearance in the war-field: for there they wore

little clothing, and when engaged in active combat, still less; and moreover, in many cases, their bodies were disfigured with paint, their gestures were uncouth, and their yellings were frightful. But no just estimate of a people can be formed in the turmoil of war. Their true character can only be known in the frankness and hospitality of home scenes. In these all men approximate, as all have similar desires and wants, sympathies and affections.

As Octavius became more familiar with the Cattle in their domestic character, he found much happiness and virtue among them; and he was soon led to abandon the prejudice, so unfavourable to the social and moral character of the Britons, which his commander entertained against them, from the custom of several families living and sleeping in one abode, consisting of only one apartment. The Druids, who had absolute control over all British usages, were, indeed, far too rigid in their morality to have countenanced this unnatural state of society, so unhesitatingly ascribed to them by Cæsar, but which some subsequent events in the history of Britain appear to disprove.*

* Cæsar charges the Britons with having their wives in common, and of living in total disregard of the marriage tie. It is

Octavius endeavoured to ingratiate himself, not only with the king and chiefs, but also with the humblest freemen, and even with the slaves. For in his peculiar situation, the good will of every man had its value; and on some one of the many pretexts which his own ingenuity suggested, he soon gained an entrance into many homes in Ver. In one abode he found a man of a vigorous mind, which the abject lot of a bondsman had not subdued.

This man was a war-captive from the fair presumed, however, that he had little opportunity of gaining correct information of their domestic habits. He probably formed his opinion from the circumstance of the father, his sons, and occasionally grandsons, together with their wives and children, dwelling under the same roof. His charge very ill harmonises with a subsequent account of a British queen, who was driven from her throne for her want of chastity. Regal unfaithfulness would hardly incur the resentment of a people, who were themselves universally addicted to the same vice. The charge is inconsistent also with the severe moral teaching and discipline of the Druids, and their unbounded influence over the people. Diodorus Siculus, a contemporary of Cæsar, says of the ancient Britons: "their manners are plain and simple, and they are absolute strangers to the pernicious cunning and dissimulation of the men of our times." The Germans, it is acknowledged by Tacitus, maintained fidelity in marriage; and their mode of living was very like to that of the Britons. The Irish and Welsh peasantry are also examples, in the present day, of similar habits to those of the Britons, without incurring the imputation of the alleged unnatural practice.

gion of Cantii,* whose people had made a greater progress in the arts than any other British tribe. Taxmillan, though a chieftain's son, was skilful in working in metals. For having received an injury in early life, from the effects of which he never wholly recovered, he had been obliged to abandon the pursuit of the huntsman and warrior, and seek occupation in mechanical employments, for which his quick perceptions and strong intellect well fitted him.

The mechanical skill, however, which he acquired eventually, proved to him a great misfortune; for when he and some others were taken captive by Cassibelan, in one of that chieftain's successful campaigns, Taxmillan's valuable talents were soon discovered, and his ransom fixed at a price that rendered its payment impracticable. He, in consequence, remained a bondsman; and his father, whom the people of Cantii were able and willing to redeem, chose rather to remain in captivity with his son, than to return alone to the green hills and wooded valleys of the fair land of his birth and kindred. "And although years have since rolled away," as Taxmillan observed to Octavius, "never do I see the blossoms on the trees in the gay spring-tide, without remembering

* Kent.

my father's generous affection; for it was at that glad season of the year, when new joy enlivens all hearts, that he resigned himself to a hopeless lot for the love of me."

The simple yet touching dignity with which this poor bondsman told his tale of hardship and wrong won the warm sympathy of Octavius; and from further acquaintance with Taxmillan and Cormo, he began to see that outward circumstances neither elevate nor degrade the man; but that real worth springs from purity of purpose, and the power of the mind to make the events of life, as they arise, subserve some useful and beneficent end. Hence slavery, however unjust and cruel in itself, lost a portion of its odium in the eye of the Roman, as the perception of the fact became more vivid, that, if cast down into that abject state, he might still retain his self-respect, provided his conduct were governed by the wisest thoughts and purest feelings of his mind.

Taxmillan had married one of the Catte bondswomen soon after his settlement in Ver. He had taken this step with the hope of increasing his father's comfort, and of mitigating his own hard lot, through those humble enjoyments, and the exercise of those affections which spring up and flourish only in the sanctuary of home, and which

are happily confined to no rank in life. His wife, however, had long since died ; and by this event life had lost much of its interest and sweetness.

Yet a strong sense of his duties to his children had made him conceal, as much as possible, every outward token of a grief which, in retirement and the lonely watches of the night, frequently interrupted his peace.

Taxmillan's children inherited his talents. His daughters had acquired much skill in the practice of the potter's art, as then known to the Britons ; dexterously forming, with the hand alone, the funeral urn, or utensils for domestic purposes, which were subsequently dried and hardened by exposure to the sun or fire. His two sons were, for the age in which they lived, ingenious mechanics. One was a carpenter, whose employment consisted in frequently repairing or building war-chariots, in erecting cottages and sheds, and in making articles for domestic, agricultural, or warlike uses. The other son worked, like his father, in metals. The chief products of his labour were the sword and spear of the warrior, a few domestic utensils, and the ornaments which adorned, in these simple times, the wealthy of the tribe.

The Britons, though they knew very little of the mineral treasures of their island, had some

knowledge of the properties and value of iron, copper, and lead; and of these three metals iron was the most scarce, and thought the most valuable. Personal ornaments were commonly made of it, and also those metallic rings which were occasionally used as a species of money by some of the tribes.

As Octavius's lot was in some respects now similar to that of the British slave, he found a sympathy springing up in his own mind for that unfortunate class, and felt an interest in their woes and joys. In their society he was more at his ease; and the somewhat melancholy tone of their thoughts was in keeping with his own feelings. Whereas, in the presence of the warrior chiefs, he was obliged to assume an air of ease and cheerfulness which he did not feel, in order to avoid suspicion arising against him of want of confidence and bravery. Hence, while the chiefs were absent on their hunting excursions, Octavius passed the greater part of the day, either in the homes of the poor, or in the shed where Cormo usually worked, and which was not far from Condidan's dwelling.

One day, as he stood talking to him, he suddenly noticed that the slave did not relax from his melancholy manner, as he had hitherto done when

his Roman friend came to pass an hour in conversation with him. Octavius also fancied that Cormo's melancholy rather increased, the longer he talked to him; and he soon, therefore, became alarmed, and eagerly questioned the slave, whether any fresh evil menaced either of them.

Cormo did not reply, but his staff dropped more slowly on the skins he was beating, and at length he paused; but it was only to wipe away the tears which had started to his eyes. Octavius, now greatly alarmed, entreated him to tell the cause of his grief; and moved by the urgency of one whom he loved, and with whose desires he felt bound to comply, the slave said with evident reluctance—"In three days there will be a great festival;"—and then hesitated, as though unwilling to add more. But these words were sufficient, from the peculiar manner in which they were uttered, to rouse the slumbering fears of Octavius, and he started back a few paces, as if some venomous creature had suddenly crossed his path. Still, determined to obtain a more definite ground for his fears, he urged Cormo to speak more intelligibly; and at length drew from him the remark, that "the Catte warriors were indeed severe, but the priests were relentless;" adding emphatically, "and they never forgive their foes."

"I do not indulge the thought that they have forgiven me," said Octavius, anxious to divert the subject of conversation to himself, and to know the worst, if indeed the slave had any thing further to disclose ; and added, "but while I am treated with frankness and hospitality, I cannot abandon all hope."

Cormo, at these words, shook his head, but did not reply, until the anxiety of Octavius extorted from him the significant words,—“ War-captives are often sacrificed at the great festivals; and who can say whose turn it may be next?”

“ Then you know that my doom is fixed ?” said Octavius, hurriedly.

“ I know nothing,” answered Cormo, timidly ; “ but fear makes me sad. Ah, how often have I trembled at these great festivals, expecting my own turn would come ! My companions have all perished in times of trouble, when the Druids said the gods were angry with the tribe ; and it is long since I have had any of my race to look upon, or weep for. Roman, you have been kind to Cormo, and he must be sorrowful when he fears that evil may come upon you. Ah, ’tis better to die one’s self, than lose friend after friend until all are gone !”

Octavius was greatly moved by the affection of this humble man, shewn too at a time when he

most deeply felt its value. He stood for a few moments engrossed with the idea of the peril that threatened him; and then, greatly agitated, directed his thoughts to some means of escape. But this was a matter which required much more consideration than he could now give it; for the waning light of day, and the noise of the hunters returning from their day's chase, warned him that he must leave for a more fitting time a subject so exciting, and reassume his usual composed demeanour. Earnestly conjuring Cormo to give him immediate information, if he should learn any thing more definite of the intentions of Cassibelan and the Druids towards himself, Octavius left the shed and entered the dwelling of his host.

Condidan and Segonax had returned from a successful day's hunt, and they met him with the hilarity which the prospect of speedy refreshment, after many hours of fasting and toil, excited, together with the pleasure of recounting to him the daring and skilful feats of the day. For, being conscious of the superiority of the Romans to themselves, they felt no small gratification in relating their exploits to Octavius.

Notwithstanding their aversion to the captive, as a Roman foe, their constant intercourse had broken through their reserve, and had lessened, if

not extinguished, their hatred to him ; and there were occasions, and this was one, on which Octavius might have reasonably thought, that very little dislike of him now existed. But he knew that they only acted on the impulse of the moment, and would often relapse from an easy frankness into the reserve which they had at first constantly shewn him. And just now he thought he should prefer neglect and coolness, as being more in unison with their designs, to familiarity and good humour, from which, being impulsive and temporary, he had nothing to hope. But he was mistaken. Neglect and coolness at this time would certainly have confirmed Cormo's fear, and taken away the little comfort which a dark uncertainty still left him.

There is nothing more irksome and distressing to a mind engrossed by some subject of alarming interest, than the necessity of taking part in trifling conversation ; and eagerly did Octavius desire the hour of repose, when he should be free to consider, without interruption, his critical situation. But the quietness which he desired was of little service to him when it came.

He soon decided that escape from the Catte, if possible, was undesirable ; as he could not hope to find any where, in a land of hostile men, a secure

asylum. The Trinobantes were the only people among whom he might expect to receive protection. They had indeed entered into an alliance with the Romans; but it was probably only a temporary one, with a view to a particular object, and as that object had been attained in the restoration to them of the son of their late king, it would be hazardous for a stranger to venture among them, in the expectation of meeting with safety and hospitality. There was too little stability in the character of these rude times, for Octavius to hope to secure permanently the good will of any British tribe.

CHAPTER V.

VERY early in the history of mankind periodical seasons of barter were connected with religious festivals. This union was convenient, and even necessary. For when the scattered clans of a tribe were drawn together to celebrate their religious solemnities, it was natural that each one should exchange his superfluities for those things of which each was in want.

On the morning of the day of the great festival, the Catte, who dwelt in small towns in various parts of the district of the tribe, crowded into Ver. The chiefs of the town were the principal persons at the place of exchange, as very few besides themselves could accumulate a store of the simple articles then in use for barter. The artisan was either a domestic slave or a bondsman, dwelling in a hut near to that of his chief, by whom the products of his labour were claimed in exchange for whatever supplies his family required. The ingenious Taxmillan knew that he did not receive a just remuneration for the unceasing toil of himself and family. He saw that he could long ago have been rich,

according to the use of the term in that age, if he had been allowed to barter the articles he made for his own advantage. For these festivals were attended by many hunters and warriors, who were anxious to obtain weapons and implements, in the making of which he greatly excelled.

But this was an age of might over right, when the strong ruled the weak ; and as it was believed that the gods reserved their favours for priests and warriors alone, there was much confusion in men's ideas of right and wrong. If occasionally a gleam of light entered into a vigorous mind like that of Taxmillan's, that the feeble and helpless deserved a more mild and just treatment from the wealthy and the strong, still he knew that it must there lie hid, and never move his lips to utterance.

As the chiefs of Ver were by no means so rich in flocks and herds as they had been previous to the sacking of their town, they quickly exchanged the various products of their artisans and bondsmen for the cattle and sheep and other commodities brought by the strangers, being anxious to avert, if possible, from themselves and people, a threatened scarcity in the ensuing winter.

The most bustling scene in this primitive mart was about several rude carts, the carruses of the

Britons, and which bore some resemblance to the modern tumbril, still in use in some districts in England, the axles of which were firmly inserted into circular blocks of wood, the first rude attempt at wheels, and which revolved with them. In these clumsy vehicles was a great number of skins and a large store of honey.

Comhal, the wife of Cassibelan, obtained the largest quantity of the delicious liquid, by having brought into the market a bronze chain, a rare article for barter. But the late plunder of the town had made the rich lady comparatively poor, and obliged her to exchange one of her own trinkets for honey, which was as necessary in the great feasts of the king, as these feasts were to his popularity in the tribe.

Although there were many more anxious for the purchase of honey, Comhal effected her exchange with the greatest ease and success. For she adroitly drew the attention of a young hunter to the chain, and while he was admiring its beauty, his thoughts reverted simultaneously to the distant fair one, whose favour, he believed, it would win for him; and his large store of the indispensable liquid was readily exchanged for this useless but coveted ornament. Malvina found more difficulty in obtaining a sufficient quantity of the same arti-

cle for the winter use of her family, having little else to barter than osier-baskets, which she and her daughter were expert in making. But as these were the little luxuries of town-civilisation, they were not much in request with the inhabitants of the forest-wilderness.

The inconveniences of this mode of barter had long been felt by the Britons, and yet they were reluctant to adopt the only remedy,—a circulating

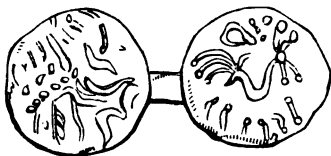


medium, which was not altogether unknown to them. For money,* consisting of flat pieces of

* Cæsar ascribes to the Britons the use of money; but whether coined or not is uncertain, as some antiquarians of repute understand him to mean only pieces of brass and iron. Coined money belongs to a more advanced state of civilisation than that of the ancient Britons of the Julian era. Mr. Ed. Lhwyd,† in his travels through Cornwall in 1700, says, in a letter to Mr. Tonkins, "several horse-loads of iron money were found six years since;" "which," as Mr. Tonkins observes, "I am apt to believe that Mr. Lhwyd rightly concludes was the British money mentioned by Cæsar." And then he adds, "This present year, 1730, as they

† Dr. Borlase's *Cornwall*.

iron, with a hole in the centre for the convenience of stringing them together, was in partial use in the southern districts among the chiefs; but the greater part of the community were averse to its adoption, not perceiving the facilities with which, by its means, they could carry on traffic in their rude marts.



were pulling down the great tower at Boconnock, in Cornwall, about a peck of the same sort, but of a larger size, were found in part of an old wall there." This money consisted of thin square iron laminæ, with a small hole in the centre; probably for the convenience of stringing them; and was no doubt the rudest and earliest money in use in Britain. The introduction of this kind of money among the Catte, I have ascribed to Cassibelan, which, though not an historical fact, is highly probable; as it can hardly be supposed that a tribe, so powerful and successful in their wars, could be ignorant of the changes and improvements in neighbouring states. As to the existence of money in some of the maritime districts of the southern part of the island, there cannot be any doubt. Some gold coins, with figures traced upon them, were found, in 1749, at Karnbre, Cornwall, a spot abounding in Druidical remains; and which Dr. Borlase also ascribed to the ancient Britons. Dr. Davies supposed them, however, to be bardic talia-

After this primitive fair was over, the Druids, according to their invariable custom, proceeded to hear and settle the disputes and differences of the people. At these stated periods the greater part of the tribe were gathered together; and as it was in some degree compulsory with them to witness the administration of justice by these austere judges, greater celebrity was hereby given to their decisions. The stability of society, and its conservation and progress in civilisation, must ever mainly depend on the continuity of peace and good order. And hence it is that almost every system of religion, though blended with much error, and encumbered with many frivolous and absurd rites, has helped to mitigate the fierceness and lust of human passion, to soften the barbarity and rudeness of early times, and to ameliorate the civil and social institutions of man. It has always been, indeed, the main element of progress, and the strongest bond of union and order. In every form

mans, and the traced figures to be symbols of the faith of the Druids. As gold must have been a scarce metal in the early British period, it is far more probable that these were devoted to sacred uses; and that the iron and brass money of Cæsar were alone used in secular transactions. There is a coin ascribed to Cassibelan; but as this is an improvement on the Karnbre coins, its age seems uncertain, and scarcely so remote as that of this renowned British commander.

it has enjoined the good will of neighbour to neighbour: its great fault and failure being, in a social aspect, its exclusive spirit, in not extending its arms of love and brotherhood to all of every clime and colour.

The Druids armed themselves with the secret and awful power of religion, and exercised it with great and constant effect, in the preservation of peace, and the promotion of good feeling among the Britons. By its influence they ameliorated the condition of the people, and planted in their rude nature the first seeds of civilisation; and they ought, therefore, to be regarded as benefactors to their species.

The Druids held their tribunal at a distance from the town, in an open glade of the forest, where stood the temple and many other monuments connected with the religious belief and superstitions of the Britons. The most ancient and sacred of these was a large erect and lofty stone,*

* Solitary upright stones are the simplest, and probably, in most cases, the oldest of all ancient monuments. The name which they still bear, and the existing customs of the neighbourhoods in which they stand, which are so intimately associated with them, will serve perhaps to elucidate the objects for which they were originally set up. In the Western Isles of Scotland they are called Bowing stones; and round them the people perform the

which, tradition reported, had stood there from time immemorial, and was the first which had been



set up on that sacred spot, around which the earliest worshippers had assembled to perform their

deiseal, whenever they pass by them. In some parts of England they are called Hare or Hoare stones ; which means border or boundary-stones. When near or on battle-barrows, they are supposed to have commemorated victories ; and when placed near the borders of other barrows, to have been monumental. From this latter custom has arisen probably the practice of setting up tombstones in more recent burial-grounds. Those solitary stones, which were erected by the Druids for religious purposes, are, there is little doubt, the most ancient ; and it is possible that many of these, after having long ceased to be used for religious purposes, became, from their situation, boundary-stones to succeeding generations. Hence the present name is sometimes apt to divert the attention from the design and use of these early monuments. The

religious rights. As the complexity of ideas increased, the temple was substituted for the isolated stone. But the origin of the temple and

Druids, and the priests of other nations, disclosed to none but the initiated the secret object for which the upright stones were raised, while the people were taught only to regard them with a mystic feeling of reverence, as emblems of Divinity and sacred objects, round which they must gather for worship. The reverence which is still cherished for these upright stones, in all countries where they exist, is a sufficient proof that they were originally devoted to sacred uses, and have continued to be so regarded by successive generations. To abolish this idolatry, as it was termed, the wise authorities of France, in 1672, ordered all upright stones to be removed and destroyed. By this step they robbed posterity of those interesting relics of far-distant ages, without effecting their object, the eradicating superstition from the public mind; a work which the voice of sound instruction may in due time effect, but which human edicts can never accomplish. Many of these upright stones are of great magnitude. One, near Rudstone in Yorkshire, may be cited as an instance of their dimensions. This stone is twenty-four feet above the surface; and some suppose it to be as much below; the breadth is five feet, and the thickness two feet five inches; and the weight is estimated at forty tons. The term *Cromlech* has been sometimes applied to upright stones, as well as to those which I have described in note (p. 108). But as these monuments are so dissimilar in appearance, and were raised, no doubt, for very different objects and uses, the giving the same name to both leads to much confusion. Mr. Higgins preferred the term *Lithos* for the single vertical stone; but as this Greek appellation is never likely to be generally adopted, the names by which they are known in their respective localities, and in the absence of these, the simple term of upright stones, seems to me to be preferable.

all the other monuments of this hallowed place were alike unknown to the people. The Druids, who well knew the fascination and power of mystery, kept them in ignorance of the antiquity of their sacred fabrics, and of the means and powers by which they were raised.

The single upright stone stood at some distance from the temple, and was the first object approached by the Cattle in groups, for the purpose of performing the deiseal, a ceremony never omitted by any who passed by it. The Druids waited until all had complied with the observance. Casbar then took his place close by it, with his brethren, and called upon the people to declare their grievances.

The cases for adjudication were seldom numerous, as the vigilant and wise administration of the Druids, and the simplicity of the age, prevented frequent breaches of the laws. On this occasion there was only one of importance, relating to the removal of a landmark.* This was an

* The preservation of landmarks was an affair of great moment in an age in which there were no other artificial distinctions to determine one man's land from that of another's. It was the business of shepherds and herdsmen, in early times, to keep their flocks and cattle within the respective boundaries of their masters' lands, and prevent their trespassing on those of other persons. The removal of landmarks was regarded by the Mosaic law as a grievous

offence which the Druids treated with great severity, as its frequent commission would have led to very serious disputes between the chiefs, regarding the boundaries of their respective lands.

Farinmail, the eldest son of Brocmail, the most wealthy chief in Ver, except Cassibelan and Condidan, came forward to complain that one of his father's landmarks had been removed, and to charge the offence on the clan of Condidan. As the possessions of the two chiefs lay contiguous, and as a feud had long existed between them and their clans, the probability that the offence lay with Condidan's people was apparent to the Druids.

Condidan was, in consequence, desired to collect his retainers and bondsmen together, and proceed to the Judgment or Logan-stone,* ano-

transgression; and it was a crime of which the Druid-priest, in common with all ancient legislators, took particular cognisance, and visited with severe punishment. The Romans regarded landmarks as sacred; and had a divinity who was believed to preside over bounds and limits.

* Some Logan-stones were wholly erected by the Druids; others were the productions of nature and art combined. Professor Playfair observes, that many of them "were the result of natural causes, being subject to the universal law of wasting and decay, in such peculiar circumstances as nearly to bring about an equilibrium of that stable kind, which, when slightly disturbed,

ther of the sacred monuments scattered over this hallowed glade.



would re-establish itself." Brewer says, there are instances where the *tool* has evidently been employed on masses of rock, and the work left incomplete. The Druids would probably assist nature in the work of forming rocking-stones, wherever they desired to have them and did not find them ready for use. Antiquarians conceive that these Logan-stones were used by the Druids as oracles, to assist them in detecting the guilt of suspected persons. This opinion is favoured by the name still given to them in Scotland, where they are called *Cloëa*, 'breath;' that is, stones of judgment. Pliny speaks of one made by Lysippus at Tarentum. One was placed in the Prytaneum in the citadel of Athens, where the magistrates and judges assembled for judicial business. In ancient times they were probably very numerous. While the people revered them as divine oracles, the Druids privately venerated them as sacred memorials of one of the objects of their traditionary faith.

The Logan consisted properly of two stones, the upper a large mass of rock placed upon the under one, "on so small a centre, and in so exact an equilibrium, that it moved, to a certain degree, with the application of the hand; and though yielding to so slight a touch, could not be overthrown by any common force."

The clan of Condidan were commanded to advance a step beyond the people, and were arranged in three lines before the Logan-stone. The first line was formed of the slaves, the second of the younger clansmen, and the third line was headed by Condidan, and composed of the chiefs of his clan.

No attempt at exhortation was made to win the offender to confession. The Druids designed to make an appeal to divine justice; and this appeal was deemed by them sufficient to work on the mind of the guilty, and induce him to acknowledge his offence.

A long and deep silence ensued, during which Casbar carefully examined the countenance of every clansman before him. For although in this, as in all ordeals, the priest had recourse to an artifice to convince the assembled multitude, that some divine power assisted in the detection of the offender, yet it was really by this searching scrutiny

of the sagacious sage that the guilty party was discovered.

The artifice consisted in this: one of the Druidical party was stationed near the Logan or rocking-stone, in such a position that he could secretly insert a wedge, on a sign being given by the judge, under the stone, and so prevent its moving to the touch of the guilty party. And as each individual constituting the clan approached and touched the stone in succession, the rocking or fixity of the Logan announced to the whole assembly the innocence or guilt of each person. And as this ordeal was performed by all with feelings of the greatest awe, springing out of the solemn conviction that the detection of the offending party was the act of an interposing deity, it is not surprising that he should be unable to pass the ordeal without great trepidation, and manifesting such tokens of his guilt as would easily be seen by the quick-sighted and experienced Druid. And hence, whilst the guilty rarely escaped detection, the innocent was as seldom falsely accused.

Casbar stood by the rugged but massive monument, which, though of great weight, was easily moved by the hand of innocence. The slaves were first commanded to advance to the Logan. Each man touched the rock, and to each touch the rock

vibrated. Their innocence gave confidence to the second line, which consisted of young warriors and hunters, who were ordinarily bold and brave men, but who were now not a little cowed by the solemnity of the trial through which they were about to pass.

After the men of the second line had proved their innocence, the third advanced to the Logan. The young chiefs were first called to the ordeal; and, to the indiscriminating eye of the spectators, all these youthful warriors approached the judgment-stone with the fearlessness of innocence. But among them the keenly observant eye of Casbar noticed one, beneath whose confident manner lurked signs of uneasiness. There were evidently muscular movements of the features which could not be repressed, especially about the mouth, and a varying hue of the countenance, as he raised a somewhat trembling hand to the sacred rock, which satisfied the unerring judge.

Casbar, unseen by the people, immediately conveyed to the Druids, who were near him, the discovery which he had made, the wedge was inserted, and the rock moved not again to the touch. The assumed courage of the youth instantly failed him at this divine announcement of his guilt. He sunk, pale, affrighted, and powerless, at the base

of the rock, as a spontaneous shout came from the spectators of "Miorbheil."*

The father of the youth hurriedly stepped from the line, exclaiming, with evident anguish, "My son, my son!" But before he could add more, Casbar commanded silence, and ordered the youth to arise and confess his guilt. Encouraged by the protection which the presence of his father seemed to afford against the terrors of the stern judge, he readily obeyed, and acknowledged that he had removed the landmark to revenge himself on Farinmail. Having heard this confession, the mortified parent suppressed his displeasure towards his son for the present, and now only sought to extricate him from the difficult and disgraceful situation, into which he had heedlessly cast himself.

There were but two means of satisfying Druidical demands. One was by stripes, and the other by payment of a heavy fine or tribute. The poor man was obliged to submit to the former; the wealthy chief could choose the latter. The amount of tribute having been fixed, and the payment of it promised by the father, the abashed youth, surrounded by the members of the holy order, followed Casbar to another hallowed monument

* A Celtic term for 'finger of Bel.' Whence comes the French *merveille*, and our 'marvel.'

in this sacred glade, for the purpose of submitting himself to the ceremony of passing through the Tolmen,* as a means of purgation from his guilt.



The Tolmen was either a large block of stone, with a hole in it of a sufficient size to admit a person to creep through it; or it consisted of two small stones, on which rested one of much greater dimensions. Between these was a passage large enough to allow the culprit to pass on his knees, and which he did three times in the presence of the assembled people; and by this humiliating penance he purged himself from the guilt he had contracted by his offence. Vestiges of this custom still linger in remote parts of the country, though now practised only as a talisman to charm

* From 'tol,' a hole; 'maen,' a stone, in the Cornish dialect. (Borlase's *Cornwall*.) Tradition and the local circumstances now connected with these sacred stones alone furnish any clue to

away disease. The origin of this superstition may be traced to the remotest period ; but as it is intimately connected with the secret faith of the Druids, any further notice of it here would be out of place.



At the close of the last ceremony the people dispersed to their homes, all being satisfied with

the knowledge of their use, as also of that of many other ancient monuments. The Gentoos, at the present day, conceive they are purified from sin by creeping through the apertures of the Tolmens. (Higgins' *Celtic Druids*.) They are resorted to on the borders of the Red Sea to cure diseases ; and a similar custom prevails in Ireland, and in some parts of this country. A cleft tree is also used for the same purpose. According to Mr. Higgins, there is a Tolmen at Bombay, called the Rock of purification. Like the Logan-stone, the Tolmen was revered by the people, on account of the sacred use for which it was publicly set apart. By the Druids it was religiously regarded as an apt symbol of one of their profound mysteries.

the result of the ordeal they had witnessed, except the mortified parent, the offending son, and the aggrieved Farinmail, who was not a little incensed that his youthful enemy had escaped on such easy terms.

Farinmail had an unhappy temperament, which did not allow him to remain long in peace with his associates. A sense of the injuries he had received, and he had sometimes been sinned against, instead of waning in power, seemed in him to gain strength as years rolled away; till at length a feeling, almost of aversion to his fellow-beings, had grown up in his heart. Farinmail imagined that if the Druids had not been biassed in favour of his adversaries, and if the young offender had wronged any one else than himself, he would not have been admitted on such easy terms to the privilege of the Tolmen purification.

The Druids had certainly great reason to suspect Farinmail of indulging hostile sentiments towards themselves, and had long marked him out as an untoward character, against whom they would probably have, at some future time, to adopt decided and severe measures. Nevertheless they acted with strict impartiality in their judicial proceedings, and would have awarded the same measure of justice to Farinmail, had he him-

self been the guilty party. But the incensed son of Brocmail entertained a very opposite opinion, and retired from the place of stones, secretly cherishing a passion within him which, by its irresistible impulse, would one day hurry him along the downward course of rebellion against Druidical control, and cast him headlong into irretrievable ruin.

CHAPTER VI.

WHETHER or not the Britons were acquainted with the existing division of the year into calendar months, the particular event, which the festival already mentioned was designed to celebrate, was certainly believed to have taken place on the last day of October, the eve of November.

In various parts of the world some ceremonies have been, about this time, observed to commemorate the entrance of Noah into the Ark, and the commencement of the Deluge. The extinguishing of every domestic fire on this eve was a practice observed by the ancient Britons, and which prevailed long after this period. There is some uncertainty as to whether this ceremony symbolised the gloom which prevailed during the Deluge, or the darkness in the interior of the ark: probably both. There were also many other rites practised by the Druids, commemorative of this catastrophe; but as these rites were a portion of the mysteries of the sacred order, they cannot be further noticed in these pages, devoted only to a sketch of the people.

The injunction to extinguish every domestic fire, and for the representative of each household to repair to the temple to receive a light from the sacred fire to rekindle his own, was rigidly enforced by the Druids, and a terrible punishment was inflicted on each one who should fail to comply. The penalty of disobeying this injunction was excommunication, which, as will presently be shewn, was as disastrous in its consequences as any of the forms of excommunication in later times.

The evening soon closed over the town after the termination of the trial; and when Octavius saw the household busy in collecting together their tributes, he thought his hour had come,—that solemn hour when the life-blood, which now ran through his veins, should be by violence and torture stayed in its course. Well might his spirit sink within him, his tongue lose its utterance, and the anguish of despair, like a possessing demon, enter his heart at the awful thought of the short interval which now probably lay between the bonds that should bind his limbs, the sacrificial fire that should consume his body, and the gulf into which death would cast him.

Happily for him, his own heart alone knew its bitterness. His struggles to conceal every outward token of his inward wretchedness, and

nerve himself for the terrible summons, were unseen by the members of Condidan's family. He lay in his usual place on the rushy floor, sheltered from observation by the obscurity within the house, about which no blazing fire now threw its flickering light, and the household, busily occupied in their respective duties, seemed to have forgotten him.

The temple, to which the Catte wended their way through the dusky shades of the neighbouring forest, consisted of a circle of massive upright stones* placed far apart and unhewn, as the appli-



* Stone circles are the most ancient of all temples, and remains of them are found in various parts of the world. In England there were some of great magnitude, as Stonehenge, Abury, Stanton Drew, and a few others. In Scotland the tradition of the sacredness of these circles and their original use has been preserved through eighteen centuries, by the custom of saying that a person "has gone to the stones," when he has gone to a kirk. Kirk, church, and circle, are all derived from the Celtic 'cycr.'

cation of a tool to such as were designed for sacred uses was regarded by the Druids as a desecration. This stone circle, the area of which was open to the heavens, was surrounded by a ditch and mound. In the midst of the hallowed enclosure was the Cromlech* or altar-table, which, in this instance, was a massive slab; and not far off was

* The term 'Cromlech' is generally applied to those monuments which consist of a horizontal stone resting on three or more upright supporters. It has, however, been sometimes applied to a single mass of rock, whether in a vertical or horizontal position. 'Crom' is the name of an Irish god; it means also 'to adore;' and 'lech' comes from 'leac,' a stone. According to some writers, Cromlech is a corrupt pronunciation of the Hebrew *chemor luach*, 'burning, or sacrificial stone or table.' By others, Cromlech is said to signify a 'stone of covenant.' No ancient monuments have excited more attention, or have been the subject of more varied conjecture. Many of them were, no doubt, altar-tables, as the derivatives of the word seem to imply; for instance, those which consisted of a single massive horizontal stone, like that within the area of the circle, in the preceding page, which rested on the earth without any supporters, or those which were supported by stones of not more than from one to three feet in height. When they exceeded this height—(see the *Vignette*)—the Cromlech was, doubtless, appropriated to other purposes. There are many allusions in ancient bardic poems which seem to favour the opinion that the lofty Cromlech was used by the Druids in one of their mystic rites of initiation; and if this supposition be correct, the Cromlech was undoubtedly a sacred memorial of one of the most ancient and holy traditions.

the *adyta*, or most holy spot of the temple, formed by smaller stones arranged in an oval shape, and wherein burnt the sacred fire night and day throughout the year. It was the especial office of one class of Druidesses carefully to tend the sacred fire, and utter and speedy ruin was the penalty of neglect. This was the highest class of female devotees, who led sequestered lives in a state of virginity in the forest, and who in many particulars bore a great resemblance to the vestal virgins of the Romans.

The tributes brought to the temple were various, and their nature and value depended on the ability of the offerers. The chiefs brought part of their spoils of the chase or war, or in the absence of these, tributes from their domesticated animals. The women brought mantles and other garments of their own manufacture, and those offerings constituted the wealth of the Druids.

At the close of the presentations, the worship began with the ceremony of the Druids moving three times round the altar, sprinkling themselves meanwhile with dew-water, which was esteemed holy, and which was carefully collected in artificial or natural cavities, now known by the name of rock basins. The people performed the deiseal at the same time apart from the Druids in

their own prescribed boundaries, and received lustrations of the holy water from the hands of their priests.

Oak-leaves were scattered on the altar ; a rite never omitted, before a sacrifice was offered. Casbar, resting his hand on the victim, then supplicated the favourable regards of the goddess to whom the worship was paid. The animal was now slain ; and while life was ebbing away, certain parts of the victim were examined, and on the announcement that the omens were auspicious, the people uttered a shout of joy.

The thanksgiving hymn of the Faids followed the sacrifice, and as the people listened to the melodies of the divine song, their gaze was directed to the azure sky above them, now thinly gemmed with the brightest stars, while over the whole was thrown the softened radiance of the queen of night.

While the people thus drank in the beautiful by the eye and ear, a spirit, seldom felt by them, stirred within their rude minds. It was a spirit of religious solemnity, mingled with fear and wonder, which arose within the soul, as the thoughts were directed, in this hallowed place and hour, to those divine and mysterious powers which they believed peopled the skies, took cognisance of

their actions, and meted out their joys and sorrows, and governed their destinies. For awhile outward things were forgotten, and the spirit within wandered forth to objects afar off and high and holy, and to them humbly bowed in adoration,—a tribute more worthy than holocausts of oxen.

In this communion faint rays of eternal truth broke, in shadowy twilight, upon the darkened soul of the Briton; and aspirations, feeble it might be, after the invisible sprung up in his heart. And although he scarcely knew for what he ought to seek or hope, yet these anticipations of the time when the mysterious powers of the heavens shall mete out justice with an impartial hand,—when the kind-hearted chief shall receive his recompense, the slave perhaps break from his bonds and rejoice in his freedom, and the cruel and cowardly shall be banished from the brotherhood of the brave and good,—could not fail, more or less, to hallow the mind which gave them birth.

All religious homage, when offered to beings regarded as wise and holy, is accompanied and followed by an ameliorating influence; and though ignorance and superstition, in proportion to their amount, will abate the value of this influence, yet unless this homage is paid to objects impure and

cruel, it will, in the degree in which it is enlightened and comes from the heart, tend to purify the fountains of human desires and spiritualise the affections. Every act of religious meditation and worship is an effort of the ignorant, the feeble, the dependant, and erring, to hold communion with, and seek the beneficent regard of, the wise and the powerful, the bountiful and merciful.

No class of ancient teachers ever laboured more strenuously than the Druids to instruct those who came under their spiritual tuition and guidance, in the doctrines of the soul's immortality, and of a just retribution in the courts of the divine powers. Nor did they strive less earnestly to maintain an undoubting belief in the public mind, that they themselves were in constant communion with the gods, and were favoured with a knowledge of their high and holy will; that they were not only the medium of divine blessing and judgments, both individual and public, but were also powerful mediators, who, at their pleasure, could procure private and public weal on earth, or avert impending evils and ruin. They had also successfully taught the people to believe, that their mission and influence were not confined to this life, but extended to the regions of immortal life. In these tenets we may discover the secret

of their unbounded power over the popular mind and heart of the British people.

It is the belief of a future life and of a just retribution which gives strength and fixity to the moral principle. It created in the minds of the Britons a sense of approval of all brave, generous, and just actions; and if it did not give birth to the virtues of friendship and hospitality, it sanctified them, and promised, in some unseen, far-off land, still higher good to him who should practise them, than falls to the lot of man on earth.

When the song of the Faids ceased, Dunthalmo, the most aged Druid among the Catte, rehearsed to the people the tradition, announced annually, of that awful time when darkness came over the earth, the sea burst its boundaries, and the flood of waters spread over the dry land, and destroyed all living beings. The Druid bade the people remember that Britain was the favoured country, where Hu the mighty, and Ceridwen,* the mother of all the families of the earth, found a refuge and a home after the subsidence of the waters. To these two most important events, Dunthalmo added much more traditionary lore in popular lan-

* The supreme male and female divinities of the Britons, and of whom the sun and moon were regarded as the image and symbol.

guage, suited, as he thought, to the capacities of the people whom he addressed.

The scene of midnight worship among the Britons was a subject for the poet and the painter. The lurid light of the sacred fire illumined the interior of the temple, and threw its bright glare over the Druids, arrayed in their flowing white mantles, and over the female devotees, whose long tresses, streaming in the night-breeze, gave greater wildness to their figures, as they passed to and fro over the enclosed and sacred area, which was girted round by a crowd of uncouth worshippers; and beyond these spread the lofty trees, whose forms were lost in the murkiness of the forest masses.

During the long celebration of these nocturnal rites, Octavius was not left wholly alone, as he imagined. The slaves of Condidan were not far off, but were enjoying in the open air, with other companions in misfortune, the temporary freedom, which the absence of the chiefs and their families permitted them. Octavius, however, continued unconscious of their near presence, until startled by a man entering the house and calling on him by name. This sudden surprise for a moment crushed the trembling hope, which, during the hours of this festal evening, had gradually arisen

in his bosom, that he should have, at least for some time longer, a respite from the doom which he had lately supposed close at hand. For although he knew the voice to be Cormo's, he was not sure that the slave might not be the messenger of instant evil. For he was aware that Cormo had gone to the temple, laden with the tributes of Condidan, and feared that he was now come to forewarn him of the approach of men sent to hurry him to the place of sacrifice. Octavius responded to the call, in the tone of one seized with sudden terror.

"Dear Roman chief," said Cormo, with a manner so frank and hearty, as immediately satisfied Octavius that he was not a herald of ill tidings, "lay aside your fears for the present; the danger is passed. There will be no mournful sacrifice to-night. Come abroad and look at yon moon and the stars, on which we so often gazed in the forest hut, and let us speak of the days of our boyhood, when we were free as the forest-birds to wander whither we would."

Octavius, with a light heart, sprung to his feet, and followed the friendly slave into the open air, whose words had removed a heavy burden from his mind. As he strolled along with Cormo, the refreshing breeze relieved his heated brain. He

felt as one animated with new life. The stars met his gaze, as if to greet him on his escape from a terrible doom, and the moon shone more beautiful, as he thought, than he had ever before seen it. Hope, the last angel that forsakes the helpless, whispered to him sweet words of comfort, and gratitude welled up from the hidden depths of his spirit, as an incense-offering to the heavenly powers, for extending over him the shield of protection.

At this moment a flickering light appeared at the border of the forest. It proceeded from the blazing brands, which had been lighted up at the sacred fire, and which the multitude were now bearing homewards from the temple. Octavius rejoiced at the sight, believing it to be a confirmation of Cormo's words, that present peril had indeed passed by. Yet on beholding the people's returning to the town in silence, each chief bearing his lighted brand to his own home, there to kindle up the cheerful fire for the social circle,* Octavius still felt that he was a lonely stranger in a foreign land.

"Perhaps," he said to himself, "the fatal hour is only postponed for a season, to increase its suf-

* This Druidical rite is still perpetuated in the Hallow-eve fires of Scotland, Ireland, and remote parts of England.

fering, and deepen its darkness. But I will hope on and trust, and try to assuage the bitterness and win the good-will of my enemies. Time changes all things. It may change their hearts." With these thoughts he re-entered Condidan's house, if not with a satisfied, yet with a quieted spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Druids exacted the most punctilious obedience to their spiritual authority, and treated every breach of religious duty with much greater severity than the violations of civil and social regulations. Hence, while an offence against secular observances of the tribe might incur a solemn admonition, an act of disobedience in spiritual matters was sure to involve the culprit in penalties more or less grievous.

Farinmail had deeply offended the Druids on the eve of November; and though no immediate notice was taken of the transgression, this forbearance proceeded only from motives of compassion to the father, and not from any intention of allowing the offending chief to escape the punishment due to his delinquency. The inability of Brocmail, who now lay ill of wounds which he had received in the late invasion, and the little chance there was of recovery, imposed the obligation on Farinmail of acting as chieftain to the family in place of his father.

It was, in consequence, his duty to appear at

the temple with his father's tributes, and to bring from thence the torch lighted at the sacred fire, to rekindle the fire of his own home. Instead, however, of fulfilling these duties, Farinmail turned aside from the entreaties of his father and kindred, and suffered his next brother, Rheuda, to take the office which he himself should have filled. His family were dismayed at his reckless conduct; and the fearful consequences which he hereby incurred became the subject of every man's thoughts. Each successive day his friends anxiously expected that Farinmail would be summoned before those judges against whom he had so daringly offended; and they were not kept long in suspense. The event, for which the Druids waited, soon took place. Brocmail expired on the third day after his son's transgression, his death having been hastened by the sorrow which his ill-fated son had caused him.

Octavius was sauntering among the mingled groups of houses, sheepfolds, and trees of the town, when the sound of loud wailing reached his ear. He was musing at the time on his own wretched lot, in which he saw little else than evil, and no tokens of future good. For no such thought occurred to him as that trials and suffering, rightly borne, might eventually bring blessing to the suf-

ferer. Although Octavius had learned some wholesome lessons from his adversity, yet he had no convictions that all the events of life are under the control of a beneficent Providence. These were not the ideas of his age or country. Such truths fell not from the lips of priest or sage, and they had no place in his thoughts. Seeing persons hurrying in the direction of Brocmail's dwelling, he mingled in the stream, and entered the house with many others. But when he beheld the deep affliction of the sons and daughters of the dying chief, he hastily withdrew, knowing that no word or look of sympathy would be acceptable from him, who was one of that people to whose ambition and rapacity Brocmail's approaching death, with a thousand other calamities, was attributable.

Farinmail stood somewhat apart from the other members of the family, waiting for the moment when the last gush of life of that aged father, who now lay stretched on the rushy couch, should mingle with the waters of eternal being. As soon as this fatal moment had passed the threshold of time, he hurried away from the house of death, and speedily withdrew from human sight into the forest shades, there to commune with his own smitten heart. He knew that he had now lost his best friend and protector, and would soon stand

alone in the world. Yet his proud soul disdained to attempt an escape from impending evil by instant flight from Ver and the Catte tribe. He scorned the thought of seeking to lessen the evils of his future lot by the least complaint. He would rather stay and brave the powers of the priesthood, and drink to the dregs the bitterest cup of wrath which they could present to him. Farinmail had fled into solitude, that he might the better sustain the first shock which nature feels, when one of its strongest, tenderest ties is broken by death. He did not return until night, when the lamentations had ceased through the exhaustion of the mourners, and the house was forsaken by the neighbouring chiefs. At the dawning light of the morrow's sun he again withdrew, after having looked once more on the lifeless remains of his parent; and the dwelling was soon again filled, in compliance with the custom of the Britons, by relatives and friends, whose wailings were ever and anon interrupted by the bards reciting, in song, the brave exploits of Brocmail.

Among the Britons, as with other rude nations, the time between the hour of death and that devoted to the last rites, was spent in the incongruous occupation of feasting and lamentation. The house of the bereaved was no secluded sanctuary

for secret sorrow, but was open to all friends and neighbours; and whose absence, at this time, would have been deemed a mark of great disrespect. But as the heart recoils from the long contemplation of the lifeless body, which is rapidly passing into corruption, men have seldom protracted the mourning rites beyond a few days; and especially when one apartment contained the living and the dead, they would naturally hasten to remove from their sight an object which would soon be painful to look upon.

The funeral pile* was therefore quickly reared,

* Though cremation was the favourite mode of disposing of the dead among the ancient Britons at the time of Julius Cæsar's invasion, yet the more primitive custom of inhumation had not entirely ceased. Among the poor especially, who always adhere longest to ancient usages, the interment of the whole body was still, and perhaps always continued, the general practice. That cremation was in use in very remote times appears from the recorded fact, that the bodies of Saul and his three sons were burnt,† and their bones subsequently collected and buried under a tree; in accordance, probably, with the practice of the most ancient inhabitants of Canaan. Two modes were pursued in cremation: in one the burnt bones were collected and placed in a cist cut in the soil or rock, or they were deposited in a cistern of stones, and sometimes merely laid on the floor of the barrow, which was the earliest practice; and the other was the refinement of the funeral urn, in which the bones were deposited. At what time

and thither the body of Brocmail was borne by his brother chiefs. Cassibelan himself took part in those tokens of respect to the departed warrior. The deceased lay dressed in his accustomed clothes, and shrouded in his woolly mantle, with his spear in his right hand, his shield lying on the left breast, and other warlike implements by his side.

The procession was headed by the Druids, with their bardic brethren, who sang the praise of the departed, while his kindred and friends followed, testifying their respect and grief in the customary manner. The bier was placed on the pile, formed of wood and rushes. Some of the arms which had been borne with the corpse were then removed, to be hung up, in memory of Brocmail, on the walls of his own house. His friends successively, and after them his relatives, took their farewell look at the dead; and each having done so, retired to a distance, and together formed a large circle round the pile.

Farinmail, as the eldest son, and natural head the Britons adopted the urn is uncertain, but probably long before their final subjugation by the Romans, as the most ancient urns bear unquestionable evidence of being the product of a rude people, and are easily distinguished from the Roman by their rude shape and inferior workmanship. The custom of burying articles with the dead has been traced to the remotest eras.

of the family, was the last to leave the spot. For he had another duty to perform, besides that of taking his farewell look and breaking away from the last communion of his beloved parent. He held in his hand the blazing brand, with which he must kindle that fire, which would soon resolve, into smoke and flame and ashes, the mortal remains of an honoured and beloved parent. He hesitated, lingered, and shrank from the duty. Deep anguish wrung his heart, till it was ready to break. He stood motionless for a time, overwhelmed by his misery, at the thought that he had probably hastened, by his rebellious conduct, the event he so deeply deplored. The visible agitation of the people who surrounded him, occasioned by his hesitation and delay, at length roused him to the performance of his sad duty. With a resolute spirit, but with a trembling hand, he lighted the pile, and then withdrew a few paces, though not to mingle with his kindred. He stood aloof from the whole world, himself a type of the condition of his own spirit; and with apparent calmness witnessed the lambent flame consume the body of him who had so often led him to the joyous chase, and more than once to the battle-field.

The fire spread rapidly, and the hot flames issued from the pile; while the circling smoke

enveloped the remains of a British hero. Aloft, on a central pole, small earthenware vessels were suspended, filled with fragrant herbs, whose incense



(a, an incense-cup.—b, a drinking-vessel.)

was believed to be grateful to the departing spirit. The bards raised the eulogistic song to the memory of the dead, accompanied by the sound of their lyres. To pass to the mansions of the brave, unhonoured by the funeral song, was considered a disgrace, and even a calamity; bardic praise being deemed essential to the future repose and felicity of the departed.

The united voices of the bards alone broke the stillness of the scene; for though the spectators were numerous, not a sound escaped their lips. Even the most careless and thoughtless cannot witness the funeral rites without a feeling of solemnity. The end of man is then before us,

and the boundary of our knowledge of him is approached; and the thrilling thought that we must all one day submit to the stern law of death, always mingles in our funeral contemplations.

The Britons, like all the ancients who practised the rite of cremation, "accounted it very unhappy for the deceased not to have every part of his body, except a few bones, conveyed into the ethereal regions by the flames." Hence great care was taken to keep the fire fiercely burning until the whole body was consumed. As this mainly depended on the size of the pile, and the combustible nature of the material used, this object was easily attained by persons of rank and wealth, whose remains were burnt and reburied, until they were reduced to a few shreds of bones; and hence probably arose the expression "the ashes of the dead."

The body of Brocmail being consumed, the Druids extinguished the still-glowing embers of the pile with libations of milk and holy water. The few remnants of mortality were then collected; and with earth mingled with the fat of animals, used as an antiseptic, were closely pressed into an urn of rude earthenware, ornamented with zigzag and diagonal lines, traced on the exterior. The urn was then conveyed in solemn procession to the place of interment, where it was deposited

in an inverted position, near the remains of other departed warriors.



Around the urn were laid the metallic fragments of the arms placed on the funeral pile, the bow and arrows of the deceased; and a pair of stag's horns, to denote to future ages that the spot contained the remains of a celebrated hunter and chief. A drinking-cup, together with those incense-vessels which had been suspended over the pile, were likewise interred; and the whole were then covered by the replaced soil, and hid from the gazing eyes of men for ever.

Casbar then addressed the mourners and assembled spectators with solemnity. "Another hero hath run his race, and the green sod will soon cover his honoured ashes. Brocmail, of the unconquered spear, hath fallen by the hand of

the last enemy, whose power none can withstand. Every form now before me, young and old, the weak and the robust, must fall in his turn by the same hand, amidst honour or dishonour. Like yon clouds flitting across the heavens, generations have arisen and disappeared, and whither have they gone? The wise, the brave, and the good have departed to their resting-place, to enter on that new and deathless life, and drink of the cup of the immortal pleasures, prepared for them by the gods. The cowardly, the rebellious, and the wicked have gone down into darkness, disgrace, and woe. Each, as he passes through the gate of death, leaves to the living a lesson and a warning. The life of the valiant and just shews you the pathway to the halls of the happy. The crooked windings of the timid, the unjust, and the base lead to the house of wailing and wretchedness. An unseen Power gently guides the one to his friends and his home, but hurries on the other to the prison-house of the cursed. The venerable warrior, whose ashes we have just consigned to the earth, was esteemed among men, and is now honoured by the mighty Hu. He listened to the counsels of the wise. He sought the favour of the gods in the day of prosperity, and now they have given him a place among the just.

Long shall his name live in song; and when men gather round the social fire, they will repeat to listening youth the story of his fame. Sons and daughters of a departed hero! let his name be honoured among you, by your doing as he has done. Let his wise counsels long live in your memories, that your last sun, like his, may set in peace. Children of earth! remember that before another sun shall have completed its course, the fates will have again sent forth the arrow of destruction; and none knoweth the heart it will pierce. Go now in peace to your homes; be brave, be wise, be good; that when death shall strike you down, you may be gathered to the halls of the happy!"

The mourners and their friends, at the close of this address, withdrew in silence; and returning to the house of Brocmail, partook of the funeral feast. The people quietly dispersed, with feelings chastened by the solemnity of the scene and the address of the Druid. Some of the poorer clansmen of the deceased chieftain remained to raise over the urn the barrow,* or mound of earth,

* Barrows are mounds of earth and stones, and are the most numerous of all ancient monuments. When formed of earth only, they are often called 'tumuli,' but when of stones, 'cairns.' Their age is, in part, determined by their contents. Those which con-



that should mark the spot, through all time, where rested in peace the urnal remains, the sacred memorials, of one of Britain's brave sons. A

tain only stone implements, and in which no metal is found, are the most ancient. Among antiquarians, barrows bear various names, according to their form; as, the bowl, the bell, the long, the broad, the twin, and some others. The bowl-shaped is the most common, and the long generally allowed to be the most ancient. Barrows are found in all parts of the world, and of various dimensions. In Cornwall they vary in size from four to thirty feet in height, and from fifteen to a hundred in diameter. In the Scottish Isles, corpses, while being carried to places of interment, are often rested on a barrow, round which the deiseal, or religious tour, sun-ways, is made. The oldest barrow on record was reared over Ninus, the founder of the Assyrian empire.

vestige of this custom still lingers amongst us, in our modern burial-grounds, in the rearing of the oblong hillock, which shews to survivors and coming generations, the last resting-place of what is mortal of men.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN this island, as in all other countries, there was a time when the entire soil was unappropriated, having acquired no adventitious value from labour. Then all shared alike in its spontaneous products. But at the period under illustration, although the greater part of Britain was a vast wilderness, yet around its thinly scattered towns, small portions of land had been brought into cultivation, and become the exclusive property of certain persons. At what period this division of land, for the purpose of cultivation, took place is uncertain; though, most probably, about the same time as that in which corn and other cereal plants became known to the Britons as valuable articles of food. Only small portions were, however, first used for this purpose, the larger divisions were kept by the chiefs, for feeding the animals which they had domesticated, and on which they relied for subsistence at those seasons, when the spoils of the chase were not available for that purpose.

On the settlement of a tribe in any district, as soon as the site of a town had been decided upon,

it became the practice to divide the adjacent land best adapted for cultivation among the chiefs, and to fix the respective boundaries by means of landmarks. On the decease of the male head of a family, the property was usually divided among his children. The equal divisions of what is now called the personals was easily effected; but the equitable division of land required some knowledge of the art of measuring, and of the use of numbers, and the task, in consequence, devolved on the Druids, as they alone were acquainted with the art of computation.

The land having been carefully surveyed by two of this order, and the respective subdivisions made by paces, and the use of certain characters with which they were acquainted, the children of Brocmail were called together, to receive each his portion, and to pay the first tribute to the temple. They obeyed sorrowfully; for Farinmail was not summoned to attend, and from this omission they feared that the Druids had condemned him to suffer the terrible sentence of excommunication; and although they knew he had sadly transgressed, yet they could not forget that he was their brother, and their eldest brother. The tie of chief and follower was a very strong bond, and always held to be as sacred as that of parent and child; and as

the brethren of Farinmail had been accustomed from early life to regard him as their future head, they could not suddenly cease to love and respect him.

Farinmail was sitting under a spreading oak not far from the house, when his brethren passed him on their way to the temple. All regarded him with deep sympathy as they walked by ; but as he sat moodily preparing arrows, and did not deign to notice their approach, none ventured to address him. When, however, they had gone a few paces beyond him, they stopped ; for they saw that he was looking anxiously after them ; and they construed this simple act into a silent appeal to their affection.

Their hearts smote them, and their love for their fallen brother now gushed forth with redoubled fervour. His sisters entreated Rheuda to turn back and urge him to seek reconciliation with the Druids. Rheuda, who had not yet been incited by ambition to crave the inheritance of his brother, generously complied with their wishes, having no desire to assume the chieftainship, provided Farinmail would take the right measures to secure it to himself.

As Rheuda drew near, he faltered, and more and more at every step. He hardly knew why,

but he had often felt a fear come over him in his brother's presence, when alone with him. Farinmail had resumed his employment, and did not look up till his brother stood at his feet. After a few moments' pause, Rheuda suddenly took the courage of a man who feels he must not pause in the course he has taken, lest his heart should fail him. He began in an affectionate manner to urge his brother to seek the Druid's pardon; and was about to plead the anguish of his family, and more especially of his sisters, on his account, when the bitter look of scorn, the mingled impatience and anger which broke over the face of Farinmail, made Rheuda cease abruptly, and wait with trembling apprehension his brother's answer, which he soon received.

"Rheuda," replied Farinmail, in a tone which bespoke the stern intent of his will, "you strive in vain to alter my purpose; I will hear no more. My life has been one of wrongs. From my early days the brand of suspicion hath been placed on my forehead by the Druid priest; and now his hand is lifted up against me. Hitherto I have borne all with the meekness of a slave, for the sake of the grey hairs I loved and venerated. But the bonds of the slave are broken, and Farinmail is free as the forest-bird. If I am hated, I

can hate in return. Scorn shall be met by scorn. The days of boyish obedience have passed away. What is the Druid's will more than that of other men? An idle phantom. What is his power? A thing to be resisted. What are his commands? Empty sounds. Hasten away, Rheuda; your sisters wait your return; be happy in the honour that has fallen to your lot. It is a fleeting thing, and may not last your time. Enjoy it while you can."

To prevent further entreaty, were his brother disposed to make it, Farinmail arose and walked back to the house, and set himself down on the hearth of his childhood alone. On his entrance the domestic slaves withdrew, as if impelled by some enchantment coming from the mysterious Farinmail.

Rheuda rejoined his brethren, and they went on with heavy hearts to the temple, whither they knew all the principal inhabitants of Ver had repaired before them, not to see the presentation of their humble tributes, but to witness a rare and solemn ceremony. The people had taken their usual station just within the hallowed circle, when the sons and daughters of Brocmail arrived, and advanced with a timid deportment towards the altar. They were met half way by Casbar, and

two other Druids; and having given in their tributes, they were ordered to withdraw to the place which the people occupied.

The Druids were great lovers of silence, and well understood its effect upon the rude, popular mind, and strictly enforced its observance during the performance of all the temple rites. The whole of the priests and priestesses of the immediate neighbourhood being assembled together, they arranged themselves into a solemn procession, and circumambulated the altar three times. The tuaphol, or invocation of heavy curses, was now performed. But instead of moving, as in the deiseal, or invocation of blessing, sun-ways, the procession moved in the contrary direction, with the left hand towards the altar. The Druids were attired in their official white mantles; and while in one hand they bore the wand of authority, in the other, according to their age and rank, they either carried the magical egg or the brazen crescent.

“Wonderful is Hu the mighty one, and bright and glorious is his image which now shines upon the world,” said Dunthalgo. “He is the giver of light and heat, and sends down the rain-drops and the sacred dew. But he giveth not blessings to the children of wickedness. He sends the whirlwind to destroy, and the fire of heaven to

blast the impenitent and rebellious. Farinmail, the son of Brocmail, is condemned to wretchedness. He is banished from this holy place; his steps shall never again defile its hallowed precincts. Here his heart shall never more be lifted up in worship, neither receive the blessings dispensed from the sacred altar. He is forbidden, henceforth, to hold communion even with men, and shall dwell no more among them. It is decreed that he be driven from his home, and be cast out of the tribe of the Catte; that he be for ever despised and shunned as the savage beast of the wilderness. He shall no more approach the habitation of the obedient children of earth. He shall hunger and thirst, but no man shall relieve him. He shall henceforward wander naked and houseless in dreary places, where no man goeth. His kindred shall forsake him, and his friends desert him. The spear may be wielded against him, and yet none shall avenge it. No hand, no power shall any longer protect him. He is an outcast, and the whole earth shall be to him a savage wilderness. He shall not escape the vengeance he hath provoked. He may wander to the ends of the earth, but it shall meet him there. It shall be within and without him. The fire of the Divine wrath is kindled in the deep places of his

heart, and will burn night and day to the end of life. Farinmail is accursed of the gods."

The Druids had moved very slowly round the altar, and when the last words of the sentence of excommunication fell from Dunthalgo, they had completed the ceremony both in word and deed. Dunthalgo and Casbar advanced into the centre of the circle of stones, and turning from each other a few paces, each addressed the people opposite him with the same words.

"Children of men, depart in peace. Obey the decree which has gone forth from the sanctuary of the gods, lest a like curse fall upon yourselves. Before night throws her shadows over the earth, and the stars glimmer from the dark-blue heavens, the outcast Farinmail must go forth from his home and tribe for ever."

The people heard this awful command in silence, and each one made a secret and solemn vow to obey it. A thrilling fear had fallen upon them, which made it appear easy, even to the relatives of the unhappy man, to hold to the injunction. But when the family of Brocmail returned to their home, and were relieved from the awe which the presence of the Druids and the solemn scene had excited, they felt the duty less easy to perform, and each shrunk from the task.

Rheuda saw their looks directed to him, and felt that his first act as their future leader was a hard and grievous one. Farinmail arose from his rushy seat on the hearth, when his brothers and sisters entered. He made no inquiries of them, but placing his back to the cheerful blaze, he calmly and earnestly looked from face to face. Their serious and sorrowful countenances, and more especially their united silence, informed him of his fate. Yes, he knew the decree of excommunication had gone forth; that the curse was upon him, that he was an outlaw. Mingled passions of pride, defiance, and hate, stirred up, for a few moments, bitter feelings, even against his passive and sorrowing kindred. He quietly took up his arrows, and putting them into a skin bag which hung from his girdle, he withdrew from the cheerful fire to give place to those who would gather around it no more with him.

Leaning against the wall of the dwelling, for his body shook with the violent emotions which struggled within him for utterance, he looked once more upon his brethren. He saw that they were striving to shut him out of their thoughts; but he saw also from the mournful aspect of every face, that grief lay heavy at their hearts. His sisters began to weep; and then his own stern nature was

moved, and he was ready to weep too ; but on his thoughts reverting to the severity of his punishment, every spark of tenderness was suddenly extinguished, and fierce hatred against the Druids, by whose order he was about to be cut off from the social sympathies of human life, alone moved his soul.

No one ventured to speak. A deep and mournful silence had come over that sorrowful household, as they contemplated the banishment of a brother from the home of his birth, which had sheltered him from the storms of so many long winter nights, in which his mother had heaped on him a thousand caresses, and his father had reared him ; where they had all eaten of the same food, and drank from the same cup ; and where he had so many times listened with youthful joy to the tales of heroes, and the songs of the bards.

In early times, brethren expected to dwell from infancy to old age, if not always beneath the same roof, yet near together, and to be ever united by the common interest of family and clan. To banish a man from his home, with the awful curse of excommunication upon him, was to banish him from the social world. Whither could he bend his steps ? where find another home ? The longer and far-

ther he wandered, the deeper he would go down into wretchedness.

These thoughts unnerved the whole household, and they could not perform their sad duty. Not one dared to bid Farinmail be gone. There he stood, near the door of his own home, with the mark of Cain upon him. Like a tree, amidst its forest companions, struck by the lightning's flash, the withering influence of ruin and death had already begun its fatal work. Meanwhile the sun sunk lower and lower, and the shadows each minute increased in length.

The fatal moment was hastening on with the speed of the eagle's flight, when the orb of day would throw its last beams on the town of Ver and the adjacent forests, and when the culprit must take his last look of his weeping sisters and brothers, and, unbidden, wend his steps into the cold world's wilderness, or be driven out by the hand of his own kindred. So it must be. For none were hardy enough to dally with the stern behest of the Druids. Their commands, when once issued, were as unrelenting and irreversible as the decrees of the fates.

The sun was now half hidden below the horizon, when Rheuda with a faltering step approached the doorway; but his courage failed him, and his

heart would not commission his lips to say, "Brother, the hour is come which, like the gulf of death, must separate us for ever."

He returned to the fireside, and, after thinking a few moments on what course he should take, he looked on Farinmail and met the full, wild gaze of the unhappy man, and again his heart sunk within him, and his tongue refused its utterance. The last sunbeams had shot across the threshold of that door, which a thousand times had shut in the poor outcast from the wintry blast and the drifting rain and snow, and the shades of the forest were beginning to deepen. Farinmail could linger no longer. Warning voices, coming from he knew not whither, and an irresistible power within him, were urging him to hasten from the spot which he was no longer allowed to tread.

He bent to the storm like the stately tree, but said to himself that he would not be overwhelmed by it. A spirit proud and reckless now ruled him, and would not suffer him to give or receive one look of sympathy, one last look of affection. As if with an effort of desperation, he suddenly slung his bow on his arm, and, resting his battle-axe on his shoulder, stepped forth from the home of his past life to take his place among the savage wilds of the wilderness.

The sound of the door, as it closed behind him, fell upon his ear like a voice of woe from the unseen world, and sent the first arrow into his heart, barbed with the recollection of past joys, and poisoned with the first draught of that cup of misery which he must ere long drink to its dregs. The pathways and places of resort in the town were deserted and silent at an hour, when the inhabitants were usually still abroad chatting together in groups, and watching the young engaged in the sports and pastimes of their respective ages.

The closed door was regarded by the ancient Britons as a sign of inhospitality. Their homes were open to all persons and at all times, except in bad weather and during the night; and now, therefore, on a fine autumnal evening, every door in the town being shut, was a token to Farinmail not to be misunderstood, that he was cast off by all men. Every social tie was now rent asunder, and to him every fountain of sympathy was dried up. Were he the angel of death sent to smite the first-born of every family, he could not be regarded by the Catte with more aversion. To have addressed the poor outcast with one word of kindness, or to have given him one look of pity, if known to the Druids, would have incurred severe punishment.

Even the poor domestic slaves of his own family, who had retired into an adjoining shed, shrunk back and averted their gaze from him, as if from a spirit of darkness. He was a lone man now, who had entered on a short pilgrimage along the ways of cold, and want, and weariness, and bitterness, which lead to the depths of despair and death.

Farinmail was soon out of the town, and directed his steps to the forest, which he entered. The twilight of a winter's night deepened at each step as he advanced. When he thought himself beyond the reach of human eye, he paused for a moment, as if to decide what course he should take. But, after a moment's reflection, he said to himself, "All directions are alike to me; none will again lead me to a home or to a friendly hearth." He resolved, however, to get beyond the boundaries of the Catte as soon as he could, and walked on at a rapid pace till he reached an open glade in the forest.

Night had now thrown its dark mantle over all things, and the wind, as it swept towards him from the open country, murmured, as it seemed to him, wildly and mournfully, the mandate of the Druids. Hatred against kindred raged within him, and drove out of his heart some quiet and tender feelings which had sprung up there, amidst

his musings on the past, in his solitary way. He involuntarily turned and looked towards Ver, as if to catch a gleam of the cheerful blaze, as it shot out of the doorway of some house; but the thick forest intervened. All around him was a dark and dismal waste, through which, ever and anon, floated to his ear the night-bird's mournful note and the howl of the savage wolf.

In the recklessness of a wayward spirit, rendered fierce by uncontrolled passion, he cursed his own tribe. Cast forth from the domestic and social circle, driven from the home of childhood, banished from every scene which long and familiar intercourse had endeared to him, he felt the common bond of humanity broken, and, had he possessed the power to effect his desire, he would at that moment have hurled ruin on his tribe and kindred.

Revenge, so deeply seated in the barbarian heart, filled his whole soul with cruel thoughts, and, with a strange and mad purpose, he suddenly re-entered the forest, resolving to seek the temple, that he might wreak his vengeance on Casbar or some other of the sacred order. But he soon wavered in his bloodthirsty purpose. Awe of the Druid was deeper seated in his nature than he cared to believe. Other influences were also working a change again within him; thoughts

of the parent whom he should see no more on earth, of the lost home to which he must never return, were gradually softening down the fierceness of his anger, and soon altered his intention ; and he almost insensibly bent his steps in the direction of a hallowed spot, in another glade of the forest, where were many mounds, the memorials of brave warriors and heroes.

The perfect stillness which dwelt around and above these earthy tombs, and which seemed to harmonise with the deep slumbers of the dead, contributed still further to quiet the spirit of Farinmail. He came to his father's grave, and throwing himself on the green turf which covered his ashes, he wept sorely. Poor smitten soul, the victim alike of ungovernable passion, and of a severity which crushed those it could not conquer. But Farinmail did not long yield himself to the repose of the sacred spot, and to the tenderer and better part of his nature. The recollection of the bitter lot which would henceforth be his portion, and of those who had condemned him to it, roused afresh his pride and hatred, and he suddenly arose to renew his wanderings ; but whither to go, homeless and destitute as he was, he neither knew nor cared.

He had long loved to be much alone ; but the

burdensome feeling of the utter loneliness which he now felt, he had never before experienced. He almost sighed for some object on which to bestow a feeling of kindness; and one was nigh at hand. At that moment a bound was heard and a joyful bark, and his own faithful hound was at his side; one of that race of noble animals which has long disappeared from the British Isles. A ray of pleasure did indeed now arise amidst his wretchedness, as he caressed the faithful animal, which had scented his track from Ver. He had now a friend, the only friend he had in the world, and which would, he knew, cling to him in this hour of total desertion.

Farinmail was never more seen by the people of his tribe; and his future lot remained to them the same mystery that his wayward spirit had ever been. Some conjectured that he fell by the hand of hostile men, or perished from want and wretchedness. But his kindred secretly hoped that he had fled to a less civilised tribe in the distant north, where, restrained by less stringent and less rigidly enforced laws, he might lead a life of wild freedom more consonant to his ungovernable spirit, than that state of society which existed among the Catte tribe.

But even there the curse might pursue him,

and vengeance overtake him. For rarely could any culprit long escape the widely extended jurisdiction of the Druids; as wherever a few families had settled, these sages of Britain were to be found presiding over them. As soon as a fixity of residence was made, the solitary sacred stone was set up, around which men met to worship, until their numbers gave importance and undoubted permanency to the settlement, when the temple was reared in some lonely place unfrequented by the people, and probably unknown to them, till they assembled there to witness and participate in the sacred rites of religion. And when led thither, to behold for the first time the sacred structure, of the age and origin of which they knew nothing, they were filled with wonder, and from that moment a feeling of veneration arose in their hearts, which increased in power as years passed on. As the Druids were never seen to labour, the people were led to suppose that the temple had been formed by the gods, to whose service it was exclusively devoted. And thus they ascribed to the divine powers a work effected in secret by the members of the holy order; and the enclosure was henceforth regarded by the people as one of the most holy spots on earth, and thereby effectually preserved from all profanation.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR some weeks Octavius met with no fresh cause of alarm; and as length of time familiarised him still more with his condition, he became reconciled to it. The greatest drawback to his peace was the uncertainty of its continuance. If security from degradation, torture, and death, had been given him, and permission to share in the pursuits of the chiefs, he would have conformed to the British way of life with ease. For there is a pliancy in man's nature which admits of an accommodation to new circumstances; and besides, as war and hunting were the favourite employments of the people among whom his lot was now cast, Octavius would have found in them sufficient excitement and adventure to gratify his military ardour and bravery. The change from his former life would not have been so abrupt and great, as to make existence among the Britons burdensome to him.

The social affections, the great source of human enjoyment, are every where similar; and in the family of Condidan, if Octavius had been per-

mitted freely to indulge his sympathies, he would have found sufficient scope for their gratification. But the feeling always uppermost in his mind was, that he was a stranger and a war-captive; and though treated with some regard, he lived in constant fear of change, and even of his life. He knew not, indeed, what a day or an hour might bring forth.

Hence, even in times of the greatest familiarity with the Catte, Octavius was often reminded of his perilous position, by the slightest change of tone or manners in any of the members of Condidan's family. Sometimes they would suddenly fall from a free and cheerful conversation into a deep silence, and, as he thought, avert from him their eyes.

This change, too, he observed usually occurred on the appearance of the Druidess; and hence Octavius conjectured that her presence reminded them of his future lot. Perhaps they feared the censure of the Druids, if their familiarity with him became known to the holy order. In this manner pain was constantly mingled with pleasure in the cup of the captive, and he was debarred the enjoyment he might otherwise have found. But, amidst all this alternation of thought and feeling, he could not prevent sentiments of

regard and attachment rising within him for the family of Condidan, and which had begun to mitigate the bitterness of captivity.

When the long winter nights came on, Octavius was more frequently in the society of Cassibelan and his chiefs, who were wont to close the sometimes dull and inactive day by the social pleasures of the feast around the blazing hearth. For this purpose they assembled in each other's houses, and often in that of the king's ; and to them Octavius became an amusing, and therefore a welcome companion.

To unlettered men like the Britons, whose knowledge of the world was limited to the few tribes scattered over this island, Octavius had many novelties to relate. At one time he would discourse of the Roman empire, its magnitude, its numerous and splendid cities, the luxuries of its homes, and the wonderful inventions, and the applications of the arts made by his countrymen. At another time he would tell of other lands and people, of whose existence the Britons had never heard ; and in this manner gave them new and more enlarged notions of the world, and of the variety of men who dwelt on its surface, and made them feel how insignificant they were as a nation.

Yet this check to their self-love was soon re-

moved by the proud remembrance that they had resisted the arms of the all-conquering Romans, who could not retain a foot of land in Britain beyond a few weeks. While this thought soothed their wounded pride, the vast amount of knowledge which Octavius seemed to them to possess, elevated him in their opinion; and as he gained their respect, a kinder feeling grew up towards him, and their former dislike to the Roman captive gradually died away.

While Cassibelan and his guests conversed together, or listened to the Roman, the various members pursued their occupations by the light from the fire. Some were bleaching yarn by pounding it in a stone mortar with water, the roots of poppies, and other plants; and some were rubbing skins with fat, a process often repeated, to keep them pliable and soft. These were a part of the employments of the household slaves. The young men occupied themselves in making bows and arrows, while they lent an attentive ear to the conversation of the elder warriors, to whose high reputation in the tribe they were early taught to aspire. The females were often engaged in making garments of skins for the family. Sometimes the wife and daughters of a chief occupied themselves in separating the fibres of wool for spinning or

weaving into cloth. These latter employments were regarded in this primitive age as accomplishments, which distinguished females alone understood and pursued. Such were the various occupations of the long winter nights, even in the dwelling of a king.

The songs of the bards, who often attended their chiefs, enlivened the evening hours. They accompanied their voices with the rude melody of their lyres—ancient musical instruments which preceded a knowledge of the harp, and which were simply flat pieces of wood, upon each of which were stretched four or five strings or thongs. In these melodies the bards were often joined by the wives and daughters of the chieftains, and frequently by Moina, the daughter of the king, and Mingala, the daughter of Condidan. The person of Moina was more highly adorned than that of any other female among the Catte; for she was the beloved child of the highest personage in the tribe. Her tunic was of the finest cloth which British skill in that age could produce. From her neck depended a gold chain,* and bronze bracelets

* Whether gold and silver were known as products of this country at Cæsar's invasion is uncertain. The author of the *Commentaries* is silent on the subject; but Trebatius and Quintus Cicero, his companions in his British expeditions, affirm that

encircled her arms. Her long glossy hair, to which art,* even at this period, lent its aid, fell in natural curls around her neck and shoulders; but her eye was not so bright, nor her smile so fascinating, as that of the more simply-attired Mingala, whose gay and sprightly manners seemed to awaken in others the pleasing and cheerful thoughts which dwelt in her own pure mind. To Octavius, who had so often felt his despondent heart cheered by the joyousness of her innocent gaiety, her presence was a sunny spot in a dreary wilderness.

Before the guests separated for the night, it was usual for the warriors, with their wives, and the youth of both sexes, to unite with the bards in song, if not in exact harmony, at least with kindred hearts. The slaves, whose tasks for the

the Britons had no knowledge of the existence of these metals in this island. If the Britons had any gold or silver ornaments, they must have received them from the Gauls and other nations who traded hither. By degrees these articles would find their way into the interior parts of the country, and particularly into the territories of the Cattes, who were a very powerful tribe.

* The ancient Britons, like all the Celtic nations, were exceedingly proud of their hair. Long hair was particularly admired by them, and was considered as an indication of superior rank. To make it glossy and promote its growth, the Britons are said, in common with the Germans, to have used a wash composed "of lime, the ashes of certain vegetables, and tallow." (Henry's *Hist.* vol. ii. p. 552.)

day had also closed, were allowed to draw near the more privileged circle, and join in the joyous melody. Over minds, whether rude or cultivated, music has a magical power, and seldom fails to awaken bland and peaceful feelings. Here in the simple homes of the Britons, in their wild and uncultivated land, where the graces of polished society were almost wholly unknown, the influence of music was enthusiastically acknowledged, and its melodies were deeply relished.

These social and pleasant evenings, which Octavius not only enjoyed, but welcomed as opportunities of ingratiating himself with the Catte chiefs, were not, however, of long continuance. He soon had fresh cause for just apprehension that his life was again in jeopardy. Famine, one of the most serious and common evils of rude and early times, shewed its gaunt face in Ver, before mid-winter was past. The Romans had plundered to a great extent the herds and flocks of the Catte chiefs, and disease had committed sad ravages among them; and it was now too evident that the want of the necessaries of life, with its accompanying miseries, was not far off.

The chiefs had long since begun to lessen the allowance doled out to their slaves and dependents, and had also very soon to abridge the quan-

tity used in their own families. But these retrenchments only averted the threatened evil for a time. They could not prevent its appearance sooner or later ; for the spoils of the hunting-grounds were failing, as the severity of winter increased ; and the supply of food grew less and less, and craving want became more and more urgent, until the cry of hunger arose on all sides, and the sounds of industry day by day decreased. The slaves would not, and could not, work without food ; and as authority cannot be maintained in the midst of starvation, disorder broke in upon Ver, and power trampled upon the claims of the weak, and turned a deaf ear to the cries of the poor and helpless.

Despair, like a storm-cloud, crept over the Catte community. Men, who were wont to brave the perils of the chase through the haunts of the savage wolf-herds, and the dangers of the battle-field, became listless, and loitered out the weary day in their cheerless abodes, impatiently waiting the moment when weariness should shut up their senses in sleep, and they should have a few hours' respite from the pangs of hunger.

Children pressed about their parents, forgetful of their sports, and clamoured for food. But the piteous call was impatiently silenced, the little suf-

ferers roughly repulsed, and the voice of the child was no longer music to the parent's ear. A savage spirit had rapidly grown up in Ver, and stalked into almost every home, threatening to tear asunder every tender tie, and to throw the whole social fabric into confusion and violence.

Home was no longer the sanctuary of peace and fraternal affection. Dire want now made it a place of contention and bitterness. The fierce cravings of hunger drove from the heart the angel of brotherly love, and placed there the fiend of selfishness. Disease, which always follows close on the heels of extreme want, soon seized on many fair forms, and hurried young and old to an untimely grave. Mothers and daughters wept together; warriors began to lament that they had not met death on the war-path; and bondsmen bewailed their hard and hopeless lot. Each successive day the gloom deepened, the cries of hunger grew louder and fiercer, and general wretchedness stirred up general strife. The hour of wild and fierce insubordination was near at hand, when every restraint would be broken through, and the arm of the stronger be raised without pity to crush the weaker.

Cassibelan and his chiefs, who as yet had suffered but little privation themselves, now saw that

nothing but a bold and desperate effort could save them from being involved in the general calamity. Roused by this conviction, they secretly conferred together, and resolved on an excursion into the territories of their Trinobante enemies, for the purpose of plunder. To effect this object, they well armed themselves and their retainers, and a generous supply of food, from the small stores which yet remained, was readily accorded by all to each man.

The news of this predal expedition was soon borne to every home in Ver, and was every where applauded. Hope, that welcome guest, returned to every heart; the voice of discontent and strife was suddenly hushed; craving hunger resolved to wait, without further complaint, the result of the bold attempt; despairing mothers and children rejoiced together, though not without fear; the poor slave again raised his drooping eye from the earth, and greeted his fellow-bondsman with a smile; and by every heart fervent wishes were breathed forth for the success of the brave chieftains and their companions.

The chieftains' wives were entrusted with the management of the distributions from the scanty stores, during the absence of the warriors. For this office, indeed, they were well qualified; as

they had shewn, in the season of want and suffering, the greatest self-denial, and even cheerfulness. The peace of Ver was not likely to be disturbed by those who remained at home, as they consisted principally of bondsmen, who were accustomed to privation, and could therefore more easily endure it; and they had already shewn the greatest patience, though they were the greatest sufferers. It was from the self-indulgent warriors that anarchy was to be apprehended; but they were, happily for the peace of the town, now engaged in an adventure suitable to their dispositions and habits.

Octavius saw the departure of Cassibelan and his chiefs with secret rejoicing, as he had continued in daily alarm since the commencement of the famine. For he knew that times of scarcity and public discontent are seasons of great danger to a war-captive, and especially when the cause of the general suffering could be traced to the injustice and violence of his own countrymen.

He had, indeed, seen a change in the behaviour of many towards him, at which he could not be surprised, when he witnessed the discord which want had created even among relatives. But this was not universal; for there were some tender and heroic acts done among this suffering community. Even Octavius had experienced the humanity and

self-devotedness of woman's heart in this time of public calamity.

Malvina and Mingala never forgot their captive guest, and often secretly supplied him with food, when Condidan and others were absent. They had many times shewn him the attention and kindness of a mother and sister. But they could not relieve him from the secret dread, which the very appearance of a Druid in the town, at this time, caused him. For as public calamities were superstitiously supposed to be most effectually averted or removed by human sacrifice, he lived in constant apprehension of being seized and offered on the altar as a victim, to appease the anger of the Divine powers.

The fears of Octavius were in part well founded; and in the successful result of the present campaign, he was more deeply interested than he supposed. But however great and distressing might be his apprehensions, they were yet vague and indefinite. He knew nothing of his real danger, nor of the grounds on which his life was still spared.

The extra supply of food which had been distributed for the last two days, renewed the failing strength of many; while to one, here and there, it came too late. Among these was the father of

Taxmillan, the bondsman. Whether from old age, or some unseen disease, was uncertain, but he had begun to sink from the commencement of the scarcity. He was prevented, indeed, from suffering the extremity of want, through the generosity of his devoted son, who secretly endured much self-denial, that he might add to the comforts of his dying father.

Taxmillan concealed these sacrifices even from his children; and at a time when every one wore the aspect of wretchedness, his hollow eye, sunken cheek, and wasted limbs attracted very little attention. It was a common misery, and each person was inclined to think his own sufferings the greatest. It had, indeed, occurred to Octavius, who, from his peculiar situation, was perhaps more observant of every change in those for whom he felt some regard, that not only Taxmillan, but Corno also, shewed evident signs of a greater degree of privation, than many who were constitutionally weaker, and therefore less able to endure it. But with the causes of this wasted appearance he was not yet acquainted, though it was not long before he discovered them.

Entering the dwelling of Taxmillan a few hours after the departure of the plundering party, he saw that a great change had taken place in the

aged parent of the bondsman. Octavius had lately confined himself much to the house, being unwilling to appear among the Catte chiefs, while their minds were exasperated by the prevailing distress. He had not, therefore, seen the old man for several days, and now perceived that the emaciated sufferer had well nigh completed his weary journey on earth. Taxmillan sat dejectedly by his feeble and failing parent, and, absorbed by his own sorrows, was unconscious of the entrance of Octavius, until roused from his listlessness by his voice. Fearful of having the slumbers of the aged sufferer disturbed, he said in a low tone, "Roman, the mists of the last long night are gathering around him I have so long loved. I have struggled hard to keep off this dark hour yet a little while longer. My efforts have been in vain; the current is nearly stayed in its course."

Taxmillan was here interrupted by a moan from the aged man, over whom he tenderly leant, anxiously asking what he could do for him, in those gentle tones which come from the lips of even rude men, when strong affection softens their rough nature. But only a few almost inaudible words, in a faltering voice, escaped the feeble sufferer; and which too surely indicated that the benumbing influence of death was steal-

ing over him. He turned upon his son his lustreless eyes, and made an ineffectual attempt to stretch out his hand to him. At that moment the youngest daughter of the bondsman entered with a little milk, which Taxmillan eagerly took from her, and held it to his father's lips; but it was too late. A look, such as the dying only give,—a look, the last token of grateful affection,—was the significant answer.

Another moment passed, and the same arresting hand, which had made the lips motionless, had closed the eyes. A stillness, that was never again to be disturbed, had spread over every feature and muscle. The aged man was dead. Sweet deliverance from the burden of decrepit years, from the pangs of poverty and the withering ills of slavery, which no heart knows but his, around whose soul has been coiled the torturing bond-chain!

The painful truth, that the spirit of his father had fled, came slowly to the mind of Taxmillan, as he gazed on the pale face that would never more relax from its rigidity. Octavius and the household had quietly drawn around, and they stood silent and watchful, with that feeling of solemnity with which the living look on the dying. Each saw that the repose was that of death, yet no one spoke. They waited for the heart most deeply

afflicted to break the silence, which indeed it soon did, but not with weeping and lamentation. For now that watchings over his sick parent had ceased, he could no longer hide his own sufferings, and the pangs of a wronged and famishing nature overpowered him. A sudden faintness stole over his worn-out frame. He arose, and hastily turned from the couch of the dead, and staggered with a wild and vacant aspect to the door, gasping for air; but before he reached it, his strength entirely forsook him. He reeled and fell.

His sons and daughters rushed to him with alarm, mistaking this temporary suspension of the human functions for death. Octavius alone surmised the true cause of this utter exhaustion, as he had observed the peculiarly wasted appearance of the poor bondsman, and had noticed the few words which a short time before had fallen from him, and which had partially revealed to him the truth, that this devoted son had denied himself almost all food, to add to his father's pittance. But no one could conjecture the full extent to which this sacrifice had been carried. No one knew that Taxmillan had not broken his fast since the middle of the preceding day. Octavius with some difficulty pacified the frantic children, by the assurance that their father had fainted from

exhaustion, and that fresh air would soon revive him, and a little food restore his strength.

Taxmillan did indeed soon regain his consciousness. But what consolation could relieve the heart of a slave in the midst of such desolation? Earth, at best, had few comforts for him, and religion had few blessings to bestow on the bondsman. He had indeed often heard of a blessed spirit-land, in which there would be no pain or sorrow; but he had also heard that this was the future home only of the sage and the warrior. Of his own future lot he knew little, and about which his fears prevailed over his hopes. He dreaded lest the curse which had fallen upon him on earth should abide with him in the unknown future. He hardly dared to hope that the condition of the slave* would be changed to that of freedom.

Taxmillan suffered still more in mind than

* The belief that the bondage of slaves would be continued in a future life was received by most heathen nations, and it still prevails in the East. In the Institutes of Menu it is said that "the everlasting servitude of the soodra is riveted upon that unfortunate caste by the laws of destiny. The soodra was born a slave, and even when emancipated by his indulgent master, a slave he must continue; for, of a state which is natural to him, by whom can he be divested?" "The soodra must be content to serve; this is his unalterable doom. To serve in the family of a Brahmin is the highest glory, and leads him to beatitude."

in body. The loss of his father lay heavy at his heart, and rendered him regardless of the present and hopeless of the future. But the bodily endurance of which most men were capable in those rude ages bore him up through all his sufferings, and he by degrees recovered his usual health and strength.

Comhal and Malvina, like sisters of charity, alternately attended to his wants, each bringing him suitable food, which her own hands had prepared. Comhal knew, indeed, the value of Taxmillan as a bondsman to her husband; but the graciousness with which she, the highest lady in the tribe, visited and administered comfort to the poor slave, could be ascribed to no selfish considerations. A beneficent and loving spirit is not confined to the civilised and refined. It is an element in our common nature, and is often found in a vigorous state even among a rude people. It was so in the heart of this British matron.

The reasons which made an early removal of the dead from a chieftain's abode desirable, were still more urgent for the speedy interment of Taxmillan's father. On the third day his children were anxious to put away the mournful object, which lay covered with skins in their small dwelling, to its last resting-place; and as their

father had so far recovered as to be able to accompany it, he did not oppose their wishes.

The prevailing famine had greatly enfeebled many, and rendered all averse to bodily exertion ; and it was with some difficulty that sufficient aid could be obtained to carry the corpse to the place of interment. An opportunity now presented itself to Octavius of gaining some favour with the humbler classes in Ver, and he did not let it pass by unimproved. He exerted himself greatly to serve this poor and afflicted family in the time of their need, and gained the sympathy and good feeling of many more towards himself.

It was no slight sacrifice on his part to mingle with slaves in any occupation, and one which, probably, would not have had the approval of the British chiefs, had they been at home. For once Octavius had acted on the impulse of his better nature, and a gentle voice from within whispered its approbation. He had, moreover, made all the bondspeople of the Catte his warm friends ; and though they could add little to his chance of escape from the fate he so much dreaded, yet it was a pleasing thought to be assured, that there were many hearts beating with a friendly feeling towards him. Notwithstanding it was a common custom with the Britons at this era to

burn their dead, yet many observed the older practice of interring the whole body. Cremation had been substituted by the higher class for inhumation, which was the more simple and natural rite, and to which the poor still adhered; for they are always the last in a community who yield to innovations of ancient usages.

The body of the aged bondsman was laid on its side in a contracted position, with the knees drawn up to the breast and the hands to the head, in accordance with the most primitive usage. Alongside the dead were deposited a stone axe and a small drinking-vessel; and at the conclusion of the usual ceremonies, Taxmillan, as head of his family, poured forth from his heart an unstudied but fervid eulogy on the virtues of the departed, and in wild lamentations gave utterance to his own deep grief. And though friends and relations had not met to feast in honour of the dead, and no bardic song floated from this humble grave on the evening breeze, yet the body of the departed was not laid in the dust unhonoured. Gushes of pure feeling, and humble but ardent supplications for his future welfare, were sent forth from many souls: and these were an embalmment more precious than the most costly spices. The hand and the heart of affection had each done

what it could for him in life, and now also in death. The poor may pass to the grave with as little consideration from the world as they received through life; yet the sunless but undying treasures of pure affection may be, and often are, poured forth over their remains,—treasures which neither mere wealth nor power can command.

The place chosen by Taxmillan for the grave of his father was a secluded spot near a spreading tree, on the borders of the sacred glade, on which stood the monuments of Druidism, and over which were scattered the barrows of brave warriors and learned Druids of the Catte tribe. But a slave was not allowed either to rear the mound or to set up a stone in honour of the dead, however much beloved. The eye of Taxmillan, indeed, would ever mark the spot where reposed the remains of one gone, but not forgotten. Yet, to have bestowed some mark of distinction, though of no consequence to the dead, would have been to the bondsman a labour of love. The deceased had indeed set up a memorial of himself, the impression of his own virtues, in the hearts of his children, which would always live and flourish there, and which will not be overlooked by “Him who seeth in secret, and who will one day reward openly.”

CHAPTER X.

TAXMILLAN was not the only bondsman who had voluntarily increased his own burden to lessen the sufferings of others. There was another whose wasted appearance betokened much self-denial. The horn, which contained the milk that Taxmillan's daughter had brought into the house, was immediately recognised by Octavius to be Cormo's. It was the same from which the Roman had constantly drank in the forest-hut, and was almost the only article which the slave could call his own. It had been given to him by Cingotrix as a memorial of an act of heroic courage, by which he had saved the life of one of his master's children, and he, in consequence, prized it greatly.

A few other trifling circumstances, which Octavius could now link together, satisfied him that Cormo had been secretly denying himself of part of his own scanty allowance, in order to increase that of Taxmillan's youngest daughter, for whom he thus betrayed his affection. While the Roman stood in Cormo's shed to-day, watching his melan-

choly and wan countenance, a feeling of admiration was awakened in his own bosom, as he thought of the self-denial of this poor slave. He saw in this man of low condition a goodness and moral greatness, which he had not recognised in men of higher rank. Since he had been in Ver, he had suffered and reflected much, and he had gradually gained a distinct perception of a great truth, that true goodness and greatness of soul appertain not to any thing external, but are qualities of an inward nature, often possessed by persons of mean estate and coarse attire.

He was, however, soon aroused from this train of thought by the blast of a number of horns, which led both him and Cormo from the shed, and brought every one in the town into the open air. Cassibelan and his war-party were returning home with the spoils, which they had obtained with little injury to themselves, though not without great suffering to others.

Whilst yet at some distance to the south of the town, the bards and old men, and women and children, went out to meet them; and the slaves crowded the ramparts to learn whether the warriors had been successful. They soon descried a herd of cattle, and the sight was hailed with joyful shouts. The warriors presently entered the town,

the bards preceding them, singing a song of triumph, and the people welcomed them home with loud acclaim. In the assembled multitude there was but one downcast heart. It was that of an aged Trinobante, the leading chief of the town which the Catte had taken and plundered. He was not, however, in tribulation for himself. No anxiety for his own lot disturbed him; but his thoughts reverted, amidst keen and bitter feelings, to the desolated homes and slaughtered or dispersed people of his own clan and tribe, on beholding the homes and kindred of his enemies.

Octavius beheld this chief with a deeper sympathy than he had ever before felt for any war-prisoner, whom he had seen carried away by the armies of Cæsar. But he had not then been a captive himself. He could now understand the bitterness of that look, with which the prisoner surveyed his ruthless conquerors, while he strove to conceal the distress of his own heart.

The pretext of the Catte for attacking this Trinobante town, was one of revenge for the treachery of that tribe, in directing the Romans through the trackless forest and wastes to Ver. A messenger had been despatched by Cassibelan to Mandubrace, the king of the Trinobantes, to remind him of this fact, and also to state the terms on which

the chief, whom the Catte had carried off captive, might be ransomed.

Having now a sufficiency of food, the people soon recovered their strength and cheerfulness, and resumed their occupations with alacrity. The mechanic bondsmen were ordered to repair old weapons, and make new ones, with all speed; an order which indicated that they would soon be needed for the purposes of war. The chiefs were also busy on the first day after their return, in examining into the condition of their arms, and furbishing them up.

During the severe weather of the last few weeks, the wolves had become exceedingly troublesome, infesting the woods immediately adjacent to the town, and filling the neighbourhood with their howlings and depredations. It was only in the winter, when wolves were very much pressed by hunger, that they approached the dwellings of men; and the usual method of preventing their attacks was that which is still practised, the keeping of fires burning in the open air during the night. But these precautions were not always sufficient, and lamentable incidents were not unusual. As the wolves had therefore become numerous, and very dangerous, in the neighbourhood of Ver, Cassibelan resolved that, in case he and his

warriors should have again to leave the town shortly, the adjacent districts should, if possible, be cleared for this season of these savage depredators. A wolf-hunt was accordingly arranged to take place immediately.

With the dawn of light on the appointed day the hunters were all astir, and were soon collected together before the dwelling of Cassibelan. His appearance was the signal for departure, and the sportsmen began immediately to move towards the ramparts of the town. As they passed along, the smiling faces of the matrons, and the more brightly beaming ones of their fair daughters, appeared at the open doorways, hailing their friends with light hearts and merry voices.

The bustle of the whole town testified the importance of the enterprise, and that desire for success, which animated every bosom. Even from the most wretched hovels slaves might be seen issuing forth to get a glimpse of the noisy and joyous group; and for a few moments many of these poor men lost sight of their own wretchedness in the prevailing excitement and exhilaration, which many causes contributed to produce. The frosty air braced up the frame, and sent a glow of health through every limb. The love of rash and daring adventure thrilled through the

heart of aspiring youth. Above all, there was the secret charm, which Nature, in her own wildness, throws over the mind; a charm, magical in its effects in those rude ages, and which the sight of forests, wildernesses, and flowing streams never failed to create.

There were in this island at that period unnumbered sequestered haunts, the resort of birds and animals, which were rarely disturbed even by the visits of the hunter. The Britons, though familiarised with the features which Nature had worn from the creation, loved to explore her deepest and wildest recesses. The silence of lonely retreats, seldom trodden by human foot, inspired an awe for the invisible powers which were thought to tenant them. Admiration and wonder were excited by the rushing stream, striving, as with a spirit of mastery, to bear down every impediment, and seemed, as if by some mystic influence, to urge the spectator forward to more daring enterprise and danger.

Unaccustomed to any artificial restraint of the feelings, every look, every gesture, and every word evinced the joyous emotion which swelled every bosom. Care, with this primitive people, was only an evanescent feeling. They seldom allowed anxiety for the future to disturb their present

enjoyment. Even the hardships and sorrows, caused by the late famine, were now forgotten. They felt and acted continually as if the saying were fraught with wisdom: "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." Nothing could check their vehement love of the chase, which grew stronger every step they advanced. The younger of the joyous throng shewed the buoyancy of their spirits, by their leaping, shouting, and other merry freaks; and by their inciting and checking their dogs, whose noisy demonstrations of delight rivalled those of their young masters; while their wild and furious aspect indicated some affinity between them and the fierce animals with which they would soon be in savage conflict.

The portion of the forest fixed on for the hunt was entered at the same time by different parties of the Catte, all of whom advanced to one point, which lay in the depths of the wood, their first object being to enclose the wolves on all sides, before their suspicions should be aroused. The blast of one horn answered that of another, until the successive sounds spread the information that a complete circle* had been formed. A long and joyous shout then burst from Cassibelan's

* This mode of enclosing the objects of pursuit by a hunting party is still practised in Scotland, and is called the 'Tinchel.'

party, which echoed and re-echoed from all sides, and was the appointed signal for every group to rush simultaneously towards the well-known fastnesses of the devoted animals.

Forward they went, forcing their way through the tangled mazes of underwood with unabated ardour ; while the howling of the wolves betokened a near approach to their accustomed retreats. A narrow, wild, and rocky valley in the heart of the forest was the general place of meeting, and destined to be the scene of conflict and destruction. It was partly covered with low underwood and straggling trees, and was surrounded by elevated and wooded hills. The leafless branches, from whence hung many a glittering icicle, and the slight covering of snow, which had fallen the previous night, and which a wintry sun now tinged with rainbow colours, gave a peculiar beauty to the scene ; while its dreary wildness was increased by the dismal cries of the fierce and famished animals in their coverts, alarmed by the barking of the dogs, and the horns and shouts of the sportsmen.

At the first glimpse of the enemy, the scene of commotion began. The limits of the circle formed by the hunters were each moment more contracted, by a united movement towards the

centre of the valley. The wolves, finding themselves fiercely attacked by the hounds, and beset on all sides by their pursuers, grew furious and desperate, and at various points began to break from their coverts and attempt escape. Every where, however, they were met by troops of dogs or by the hunters. Arrows were discharged from every bow with deadly aim; a furious onset was made from all quarters; and many a wolf was soon laid weltering in its blood, and filled the air with dismal howling. Elated and emboldened by this successful commencement, the sportsmen advanced still farther and farther, lessening the distance between each other at every instant.

Escape became more difficult, the conflict fiercer, and the danger greater to men and dogs. Exploits of bravery and skill multiplied in number, the farther the hunters moved forwards. The emulation of all, especially the young, who desired to distinguish themselves in the presence of the elder chiefs, led not a few of the incautious and inexperienced into dangerous positions, from which they did not extricate themselves, without suffering from the fierce attacks of the infuriated wolves. While the more daring rushed into the very centre of the coverts of the maddened animals, the older and more cautious hunters concealed themselves

behind the trees, or crouched among the under-wood, where, from their ambush, they made sure of their approaching prey, as they broke away from their hiding-places. Innumerable arrows cleft the air; the dogs were urged on by the loud voices of their masters, and the slaughter was great; and a mingled uproar of barking, howling, and shouting reverberated through the depths of the forest.

The hunters did not abandon the chase until they had searched every fastness, and almost every wolf had been worried by the dogs, or pierced by the arrows. Then the joyous sound from a hundred horns announced the victory and the end of the sport; and the work of stripping off the warm coats from the fallen foes, as the trophies and spoils of their success, closed the eventful day. By the time this was done, the gray light of a winter's evening began to spread over the valley, and envelope distant objects in its haziness, when the horns were again heard sounding the recall of the widely scattered party. The Cattle rallied round their respective leaders, and set out for their homes, receiving accessions from various stragglers, as they proceeded.

The hunters returned in high spirits, and a triumphant feeling dwelt in their minds as they reviewed the exploits of the day. For they were

proudly conscious of having conferred great benefit on the community, by clearing the adjacent country of a vast horde of predatory animals. Through their caution and admirable dexterity most of the sportsmen escaped uninjured ; and the few who were wounded were too proud to evince any pain in the presence of their companions. The number of the dogs was diminished, and they were no longer the joyously yelping group that had set forth in the morning ; but returned, jaded, limping, and lagging behind their masters.

What a marvellous contrast do the ancient and modern inhabitants of our country present ! The Britons were a hardy race of men, of fine athletic forms, and daring hearts ; and displayed that extraordinary muscular energy, with which a rude people are often gifted. The soil over which they roamed, in freedom and fearlessness, is now trodden by a very different branch of the human family, inferior in bodily strength, but greatly superior in mental capacity. The habits of the present race are totally different from those of the past ; and though less robust and hardy than their ancestors, they immeasurably surpass them in all that pertains to the higher nature of man. Instead of lavishing life's noblest gifts on a few rude sports and pursuits, they have directed their energies into

a thousand useful channels, by which they have greatly enlarged the sphere of their enjoyment. Those lands, which in Druidic times were overspread with the shades of barbaric ignorance and superstition, are now made beautiful and glorious with the radiance of a pure religion, and ever-advancing knowledge and civilisation.

CHAPTER XI.

AMONG primitive nations, it was usual to close all important transactions with a feast; and while the hunters were actively employed in their sporting-grounds, their wives and families at home were not unmindful of their fatigues and dangers. The feast, indeed, was given by Cassibelan to his chiefs; but the labour of its preparation was shared by the female relatives of all the principal hunters in their respective dwellings. It is uncertain what kinds of grain were used by the Britons for domestic purposes. Its conversion, however, into bread is worthy of notice. They reaped their corn by the slow process of cutting off the ears with their rude knives, and stored the whole away in dry pits or caves near their homes, taking from thence only small quantities, as their needs required. The women prepared the corn by holding a small bunch of wheat in the hand, and setting fire to the husks, and as soon as they were consumed, they adroitly struck off the grain. It was then converted into flour by the handmill, which consisted of two stones placed upon each other. In the centre of the upper

one was a hole to receive the grain, through which it passed to the concave surface of the lower. The flour thus obtained was speedily converted into cakes or loaves baked on flat stones.

In these domestic employments, the king's wife and daughter, as well as those of the chieftains, were busily engaged during a portion of the day. As Octavius observed their occupations, he described to Malvina, and others, for their amusement, the superior methods of the Romans, not only in reaping their corn, but in separating it from the straw, by the treading of cattle or by the flail.

Amidst the preparations of the substantial articles of the feast, the exhilarating drink had not been forgotten. On a previous day, Comhal had made a sufficient quantity of curmi and mead, the ale and wine of the Britons. The mode of preparing both accorded with the simplicity of the age. Curmi was obtained from barley, which was steeped in water until it had germinated. It was next dried, either in the sun or by the fire, and subsequently bruised in the handmill, and lastly, being mixed in due proportions with water, was made to pass through the vinous process, when it was fit for use. Mead was the only wine known to the Britons, and was procured from honey mixed with

water, and was also subjected to the process of fermentation. Neither of these liquors was kept long in store by the Britons, but made a day or two before they were wanted.

The hunters assembled in the abode of the king, and on this occasion the Roman and Trinobante captives were invited to partake of the feast. The company sat on the floor around the benches, which, though generally used as seats, occasionally served as tables. On these were placed bowls of salt,* and earthen dishes, and osier-baskets, containing joints of meat, from which the largest and choicest pieces were cut and distributed to the most distinguished personages; and for their use only, the bread, which was a scarce article, was provided. It is uncertain whether the Britons used fish as food, but they certainly abstained from eating hare or goose, or the common fowl; for all of which they had a superstitious regard.

Milk, mead, and curmi were plentifully sup-

* The ancients obtained salt by "rearing a pile of trees, chiefly oaks and hazels, which was set on fire and reduced to charcoal, on which, while it was still red-hot, they poured a quantity of salt water" (Henry's *History*, vol. ii.); and by this process the water was separated from the saline products. Strabo says, the Britons, as well as the Gauls, procured it in this manner; and though manufactured on the sea-coasts, it would be sought for and obtained by the inland tribes.

plied in horns by Moina, Mingala, and other young women, who, together with the slaves, waited on the company, while the matrons partook of the repast they had prepared. The dwelling resounded with noisy mirth, the characteristic of British festivity.

When the bustle of the feast had subsided into comparative quietness, the young people danced for the diversion of the company. Much expertness and grace were shewn by some of the young men, in a martial dance between the points of swords and spears arranged on the ground, the danger attending the performance of which heightened the interest of the spectators.

Osric and other bards sang the praises of heroes to the music of their lyres, and the intervals were filled up with jocular conversation. Every heart was merry and every countenance wore a joyful expression, except that of the Trinobante captive; for even Octavius could enter into the hilarity of the company. In an unreflective state fears of future evils are commonly forgotten amidst present enjoyments, and the excitements of the festive hour give a colouring to the future prospect. Besides, the Roman had not a desolated home and slaughtered kindred to remember and mourn over, like the Trinobante, to whom life

was now a heavy burden, dark and without solace. While he sat a deeply sad and silent man among the revellers, a gleam of hope and joy suddenly passed over his countenance on beholding at the open doorway a messenger from his tribe; of hope, that the season of revenge was not far distant; of joy, that he should be delivered from his captivity. The evening had closed in, and there was no light within the dwelling except from the blazing fire; but that was sufficient for the Trinobante captive to distinguish the well-known form and features of a bard from Trinow, the chief town of his tribe.

The arrival of a stranger interrupted the merry revel, and his mission prevented its renewal. For he did not come with the ransom which the Catte had fixed as the price of the freedom of their prisoner; but he came to demand the instant restoration of that chief to his tribe, and to prefer an accusation of injustice and unprovoked violence on the part of Cassibelan, in attacking and plundering the Trinobante town. This announcement broke up the harmony of the assembly, and quickly led to discord and confusion. Passion rose in the heart of every chief, as each fiercely gazed on the bearer. But their menacing looks could not alarm a man over whom opinion and long custom had

extended the shield of security from personal violence. For he was a bard, and the persons of the bards were held sacred; and on that account they were constantly sent from one tribe to another as heralds of peace or war, without fear of maltreatment.

Cassibelan defended his attack on the Trinobante town as a just retaliation on the tribe that had conducted the Roman foe to Ver. His words added fresh fuel to the anger that each moment was waxing fiercer in the hearts of his warriors, and, maddened by a vivid remembrance of sufferings, from the effects of which they had not yet wholly recovered, several of them simultaneously obeyed the savage impulse, and sprung at the Trinobante chief, as he attempted to reply to the king, and stabbed him with their hunting-knives.

Sudden as was the deed, the Trinobante bard, who was narrowly watching the infuriated chiefs, rushed in between them and their intended victim, to stay their murderous purpose. This he did in accordance with the custom of his order, for the Druids frequently placed themselves between men on the point of engaging in deadly strife, commanding instant cessation of arms, and were promptly obeyed. But in the agitation of

the moment, the bard had forgotten that he was now surrounded, not only by fierce warriors, but highly excited revellers, whose passions could no longer be restrained by ordinary checks, nor even by the presence or commands of one of the sacred order. Hence, amidst the wrath and violence of the chiefs, the Trinobante bard was thrown down, trampled upon, and slain, without saving the life of him whom he desired to protect.

As the flood-gates of passion had been thrown wide open, the waters of strife rolled on with accelerated force. The enemy having been cast down by murderous hands, the chiefs turned their wrath against each other, as clan-feuds came to their thoughts; and the result was terrible confusion, which did not subside till many a wound had been inflicted, and not a few disabled altogether.

Though Cassibelan was accustomed to occasional outbreaks in the revels of his warriors, and in which he ever maintained the calm spirit that proved him worthy of his office, he now stood appalled at the disastrous affray, and especially at one of its awful results. He beheld in the death of the bard, before they were perceived by any one else, the fearful consequences which it might bring on himself and his tribe.

To Octavius, who had witnessed the fury of

many a battle, this sanguinary scene on the domestic earth, so suddenly succeeding the flow of generous and hospitable feelings, was more terrifying and revolting than any scene of carnage he had ever beheld. Before, however, he had presence of mind to think even of his own imminent danger, he felt himself forcibly drawn from the house into the open air. It was dark, and for a few moments he was much perplexed ; but he soon understood the kind intentions with which he had been hurried from the scene of that wild wrath, which was raging within the hall of Cassibelan.

“ Fly, Roman ! fly ! ” exclaimed Malvina and Mingala, in anxious tones ; “ there is no safety for a captive foe among angry men. Hasten home. There you will be forgotten till the storm is hushed.”

The heart of Octavius swelled with gratitude to these devoted women, who had rescued him from danger, perhaps from death, at a moment when their anxiety for their kindred might well have made them unmindful of him. But before he could utter one word of thankfulness, his arm was suddenly seized, and he was forced into a running pace by Cormo, who reiterated what the women had already urged.

In a few moments they were within the dwell-

ing of Condidan, where the aged Lathmon sat on the peaceful hearth, unconscious of the frightful strife in which his kinsmen were engaged. Octavius, fearful of implicating himself in any way in the unhappy affair, sunk into his usual resting-place ; and there, enveloping himself in his mantle, he did indeed desire that he might be forgotten, till peace should be restored. Cormo followed his example, though with a sadder heart; for he knew the frightful customs of the Britons, and trembled at the thought of those sacrifices which, at the temple-altar, must atone for the guilt of the death of a bard.

Octavius had not returned many minutes, when Malvina and Mingala entered, in a state of great tribulation. They had only just heard the news of the bard's death.

"Woe, woe is in the land!" exclaimed Malvina, wringing her hands; "it will soon fill every Catte home with anguish."

Lathmon, greatly moved at the excited state of these females, anxiously inquired the cause of their alarm. But Malvina hesitated to disclose to him the whole of the disaster; and yet, to pacify the old man, she felt constrained to make some reply. She therefore said that, "in the midst of sudden strife, the Trinobante chief had been slain."

“Is that indeed the woful news which the daughter of a Catte hero laments so deeply?” said the old man reproachfully. “Weep not for him. There are still enow of that treacherous race left to dishonour the land of their birth and homes. It befits not the wife of a Catte warrior to bewail the fall of her people’s foe. It is rather a cause for joy than grief. No,” continued Lathmon, as a new idea occurred, “no, it is not for our enemies that the daughter of the brave weeps. It is for some one nearer; perhaps a dear kinsman. Speak, Malvina,” cried the old man, becoming still more moved as he more vividly perceived her deep distress. “Speak; has evil come to Condidan—to Segonax, or to —?”

“To no one of our race,” answered Malvina promptly, seeing the old man’s agitation. “If the feet of the destroyer had passed the threshold of a Catte home, and laid his hand upon some one or more of our fair sons and daughters, our hearts would have been stricken indeed with sore grief. But a more terrible woe has come upon us. The anger of the mighty and holy ones is kindled against us, and will consume us. The Trinobante bard is slain. He fell by the hands of our chiefs, beneath the roof of Cassibelan.”

The horror-stricken Lathmon paused for a

moment, and then, with a deep groan, rested his head on his knees and murmured indignantly against the increasing strife and violence of men. So spoke age; and so it still speaks, ever fancying that it leaves the world worse than it was in preceding youth. But he, who traces back the tracks of time with a faithful eye, forms a more truthful judgment.

All festivity being at an end, Condidan and Segonax soon returned home; and with feelings of humiliation mingled with terror, at the lamentable event which had taken place, they lay down to seek that oblivion which sleep gives for a time to harassing thoughts.

A calm succeeds the raging storm; and after the desolation of the volcano or the whirlwind, nature sinks into repose, as if through exhaustion of her powers. In like manner, on the morrow, an ill-boding silence followed the mournful events of the last evening; and the minds of the Catte hunters, lately agitated by ungovernable passion, were now visited by reflection and remorse. The death of the Trinobante chief did not, indeed, disturb them; for among a people addicted to war, the fall of an enemy, happen how it may, excites little or no regret. Neither did the thought of violence, which they had committed on each

other, dwell painfully on their minds ; for their festivities not unfrequently closed in broils, and occasionally in the shedding of blood. It was a dread of evil, resulting to themselves from the death of the bard, which harassed their minds, and drove away peace from every home. Even the guiltless poor, who had taken no part in the festivities and their perilous close, trembled at the consequences in which they might also be involved. Bold and hardy men quailed at the forebodings of their superstitious imaginings, and a paralyzing dread came over the stoutest hearts.

Octavius, remembering that the bard's death had occurred on the day immediately following the ides of the month, and which was esteemed "black or unlucky" by the Romans, had his share of these appalling apprehensions. He dreaded to be seen by men, in whose memories had been so keenly revived the injuries inflicted by the Roman army on their tribe. And when he saw the gloomy countenances of Condidan and others, he had reason to fear, that, perhaps, he was the doomed one, whose blood should appease the wrath of the Druids, for the slaughter of one of their holy fraternity.

The revolting and cruel rite of human sacrifice prevailed more or less among all early nations ;

and though the Romans of this era condemned the practice of the Britons, they were not themselves guiltless of the sanguinary custom.

Octavius, anxious for seclusion from every eye in this most critical period of his captivity, quietly stole out in the middle of the day, when the chiefs were absent, and the women engaged in their ordinary occupations ; and sauntering along through the town, he sought to gain, unobserved, as soon as he could, the retreat of the forest. Here, seating himself dejectedly at the foot of a tree, he yielded himself up to the mournfulness of his own thoughts.

Believing that death was near him, his mind naturally reverted to his past life. Happy youth and its home were before him, and his thoughts dwelt on the scenes of his childhood, until the eyes of the exile filled with tears. He had left the paternal dwelling, and all its tender ties, very early in life, to seek, in the dangerous career of a soldier, for glory,—that vain phantom, which has allured so many from the quiet and honourable paths of industry. And whither had the illusive meteor led him? To a land in which he had “neither a home nor a country!” To the house of bondage, to a state of hopelessness, to the brink of the precipice, from which, at any moment, he

might be cast down into the darkness of death. But he called to mind, that he had sought that retreat, not to indulge in vain regrets, but rather to drive away every morbid feeling and sentiment. He had sought the silence of the forest to regain his composure of mind, and to brace himself against the hour of trial. He was still emboldened, if it should be his dismal fate to perish on the Druidical altar, to preserve the dignity of a Roman, and die in a manner worthy of that great people among whom he was numbered. The stillness of the solitude, in which he had now passed some hours, had imparted somewhat of its own repose to his mind; yet on leaving the forest, through which the dull wintry blast murmured, the warm and cheerful abode of Condidan, with its presiding genius, the kind mistress, and the youthful Mingala, were objects to which his thoughts recurred with an emotion almost of joy, and made him hasten to return. He felt that life was still a jewel, which, if injured by wear, was yet of value.

The town had passed into its usual evening quietness; for, with the approach of darkness, all avocations ceased among a people of simple habits and whose occupations could be carried on only in the light of day. Drawing near to Condidan dwelling, which stood not far from one end of the

town, he thought he heard the voices of persons approaching; and presently, in the dim light, he fancied he could descry two men coming towards him. Anxious to avoid any encounter with the inhabitants of the town this evening, he passed from the usual trackway into a small clump of trees, and there halted till the two persons had advanced nearly opposite to him, when by their voices he discovered the speakers to be the king and the Druid, Casbar.

“Cassibelan,” said the Druid, “has that eventful day been blotted from your memory, when the face of the sun was darkened, and his light withdrawn from the earth; when a deep dismay fell on all men, and the beasts of the forest sought their lairs; when the birds hasted to their nightly roosts, and the stars broke from their hiding-places, in the mid-day, as if to warn men of the coming woe? That woe reached us through the haughty and cruel invader, who slew many of our aged heroes and young warriors, carried off our flocks and herds, sacked our town, and bore away into bondage many of our fair youth. Yet this was but the beginning of our sorrows. By these, the Divine Powers have betokened their displeasure at our sins. But the fearful death of the bard presages evils far more terrible to this land and

people. The anger of the gods can be appeased only by prayer and sacrifice. The hands of the Catte are red with blood, which cries aloud to the avengers to smite the guilty. Their wrath, when once awakened for judgment, will not be partial. It will not pass by the dwelling of the free, and enter only the hut of the bondsman. Hearken to me, then, Cassibelan: as the guilt of this people is great, we should further offend the gods by offering an unworthy sacrifice. We must not take it from the race of our bondsmen. We need not seek it among the free. There is one to whom too much mercy has already been shewn,—the captive Roman. For his blood the gods call.”

Octavius heard no more; for the king and his companion, after a slight pause, resumed their walk. But the Roman had heard enough to confirm his suspicions, and almost to convert his long suspense into a most awful certainty. That the Druid desired and was encompassing his death, he could no longer doubt. He saw that nothing now stood between himself and the fiery pile, but the magnanimity of a British warrior. And though that warrior was the head of the tribe, yet, when Octavius thought of the fate of Farin-mail, by whose expulsion from home and people, the deliberate act of the Druids, the tenderest

ties had been snapt asunder by their mandate, he knew their power to be irresistible, and that they could turn the mind of chief and people as easily as the reed bends to the force of the wind. With this distressing persuasion, and the gloomy thoughts which it awakened, the Roman entered the hospitable home of his host, anticipating that, perhaps at that very moment, British magnanimity had been cast down at the feet of the unrelenting priest, and his doom sealed, and that this might be the last night in which he should receive British hospitality.

The day of terror, to which Casbar had alluded, was one on which a total eclipse of the sun had taken place, some time before the invasion of Julius Cæsar. The event was regarded at the time as a sure sign of the displeasure of the great god Hu towards the Britons, from whom he thus withdrew, for a short period, the light of his glorious presence.

CHAPTER XII.

THOUGH the Druids demanded and received unhesitating obedience from the people generally, there were occasions on which they knew it was in vain to expect the same abject submission from a powerful chieftain like Cassibelan; yet even to him they never ostensibly yielded. For they so managed their concessions as to give them the appearance of having proceeded from the chiefs, rather than from themselves. Octavius, on his arrival in Ver, was condemned by the Druids to the fate which an unredeemed war-captive, like himself, was sure to suffer; and that fate was either perpetual slavery, or to be offered in sacrifice. It was the awakened curiosity of Cassibelan to learn what he could of the Roman people, especially of their war-tactics and customs, that had gained for him a respite from his doom.

Casbar had foreseen the result of this delay. He knew the generous nature of the Cattle warrior, and how strong an influence even an enemy could gain over him, if that enemy were a man of greater knowledge, or more varied experience

than himself. But even Casbar deemed it impolitic to withhold a favour earnestly solicited by a chief of Cassibelan's power and influence, and it was now useless to regret having granted it. The death of the bard, however, happened most opportunely for the Druids, as it furnished them with a plea for sending the Roman from Ver on a mission, which the king readily approved, though with very different views from those by which Casbar and his brethren were actuated.

Octavius, being ignorant of the scheme of the Druids, obeyed a summons to attend a council of the Catte chiefs the next day, with an undoubting conviction that he went to hear the number of his future hours. Cassibelan stood beneath the spreading branches of a venerable oak, a tree highly esteemed by the Britons, with Casbar by his side, and his warriors gathered around him, leaning on their spears. Contrary to his expectation, Octavius remained unnoticed so long, that he became perplexed and agitated. The longer he anticipated his frightful sentence, the more he felt his fortitude forsaking him, till at length he feared that his want of firmness would soon be observed by those who were near him.

The perplexing circumstances into which the unhappy catastrophe of the bard's death had thrown

them, were discussed by the Catte chiefs, for some time before they arrived at a unanimity of opinion respecting the method of extricating themselves. The decision to which these fierce and proud warriors at length came was to make war on the whole Trinobante tribe.

But this plan did not agree with the Druids' sense of justice, nor with their already concerted scheme. Neither did it accord with Cassibelan's ideas of honourable conduct towards an aggrieved foe, nor with the proposal of Casbar, to which he had already given his consent. After that Druid had reproved the warriors for their want of contrition and forbearance, Cassibelan addressed them. He had hitherto remained silent; for it was his custom to hear the opinions of others before he declared his own. By this practice he had probably obtained credit for even greater wisdom and foresight than he really possessed, as he often benefited by the thoughts of others, and avoided making observations which might afterwards appear inappropriate. He was also at liberty to adopt or reject the ideas of his council, as it might seem to him desirable; or if any sound advice had been given, he had the opportunity of modifying his opinions by it, before he announced them.

"Brother warriors," said Cassibelan, "I thank

you for the counsel you have offered in the midst of our difficulties. Many things have been spoken which are worthy of brave chiefs. You have given me proofs, that if valour could redeem us from our troubles, we should soon be relieved. But in the case now submitted to our judgment, there are other means better suited to our purpose than war; and I hesitate therefore to adopt your decision. It is my opinion that the Trinobantes have a claim on our forbearance and humanity. It cannot be denied that they have done us cruel wrong. Have we not, however, avenged that wrong? By an unexpected and fatal accident, have we not, in our turn, become the aggressors? Have we not broken the sacred laws of hospitality? Have we not violated a custom which all men with good faith keep, even towards their direct foes? We have offended against the whole of the sacred order. By our deeds we have incensed the gods against us and our children. By further outrage, we shall only plunge deeper into trouble. Not only will men raise their spears against us, but the Just Ones above will abandon us. If so, can we hope for success? We must learn to be just men as well as brave warriors. We must send to the Trinobantes tidings of the calamity which has befallen both them and us. But it must not

be by the spear. These tidings must be so made known as to honour the dead, and do justice to the living. The enemy must not have to report, that the Catte fell upon their unarmed foes on their own hearths, and in hours sacred to hospitality. Still less must they have to tell, that we treat with deadly violence a holy son of song, a sacred herald of peace, one that should pass unharmed over the blood-stained earth, even among men engaged in fierce combat. I advise that a messenger go to-morrow to Trinow, and carry the sad tidings of the bard's death, with our lamentations for the violence unhappily and unwittingly done in the festive hour on our own hearth. I advise also that we wait patiently for the return of the messenger, and learn what will appease the Trinobantes. I now ask, who has a heart brave enough to convey this message?"

Although it was the custom, and one which was rarely interrupted, to employ the bards to carry messages of importance from one tribe to another, yet the king and Druid had, for their own private reasons, determined to depart from it on this occasion. And Cassibelan, casting an eye round the assembly, fixed it on the Roman so significantly that Octavius immediately comprehended his wishes. Seeing that no Catte chief

volunteered his services, he promptly offered to carry the king's wishes to Trinow, adding that he was ready in any way to serve the Catte.

The Roman's cheerful proposal to undertake the perilous mission to the Trinobantes was received with general applause. The Catte chiefs were greatly relieved by his offer, as both pride and indolence rendered them averse to an enterprise which promised neither profit nor glory. For though they could not deny the justice and policy of Cassibelan's counsel, they had no faith in the success of the proposed mission. They well knew that the Trinobantes would not accept any concessions which they would make. They therefore foresaw, that war would in the end be the result, —a result which they eagerly desired, and they welcomed any step which would lead to such an issue.

Different motives often lead different men to adopt the same line of conduct. Cassibelan had assented to the Druid's proposal, that Octavius should be charged with the mission to Trinow, to save him, if possible, from a horrible death, at the contemplation of which the heart of the generous Briton revolted. Casbar, on the contrary, had made the proposal, believing there was little probability that Octavius would ever return to Ver ;

and if he should, the Druid knew that he still held the life of the Roman in his hands, and could hereafter take it away on some pretext which future events might furnish.

Cassibelan was too cautious a man to communicate his wishes, even privately, to Octavius. He was, indeed, desirous of saving the life of the Roman, and was glad that he had so readily proffered his services to undertake a task so important to the Catte, and yet so full of peril to himself. It was fortunate that Octavius had heard a few words of the Druid's conversation with Cassibelan on the previous evening, as he hereby saw danger impending over himself, and could more readily understand any slight intimation of the wishes of the king. The incident enabled him also to perceive, that by the line of conduct suggested, an opportunity would be afforded him of making a deep impression on the chiefs of his personal bravery, and his grateful friendship to the Catte tribe.

The meeting closed soon after it was arranged that Octavius should set out on the morrow upon his adventurous journey; and the free and cordial manner in which every chief privately offered to assist the Roman with advice respecting the discharge of his mission, satisfied him that he had gained favour with the principal persons in the

tribe. The more, however, he thought of the undertaking, the less chance he saw of his ever returning to reap the fruits of the good wishes which came from the lips of all. Nevertheless, he felt reconciled to encounter whatever perils he might incur in the discharge of the mission; for he had lately felt that life would be an insupportable burden, if much longer retained on the precarious tenure, and under the frequent alarms, to which he was subject.

From Cassibelan he received but few directions. That great warrior, from his more varied knowledge and quicker perceptions, could better estimate than his chiefs, the ability and skilful address of Octavius. Foreseeing the kind of reception the Trinobante would give him, he judged that the Roman would manage the affair better, if left to form his own plan, than if he were trammelled with directions, by which he might not be able to abide.

The few remarks made by Cassibelan to Octavius were offered as they walked alone in the evening towards the dwelling of Condidan, at whose door the king paused and added,—“I see no end to this affair, except by war. But the mission is necessary to repel the charge of bad faith and want of hospitality. Roman, your courage and readiness to risk your life to serve the Catte are worthy

of one from among a brave people. May you live to know that the Catte can be both great and generous !”

Octavius was moved by the words of the king, and was about to express his deep sense of gratitude for the protection and hospitality he had so long received, but was prevented by persons coming out of the house, when Cassibelan abruptly left him, with a repetition of good wishes for his success.

Malvina and Mingala received Octavius with a marked kindness of manner to-night, which assured him that the family, with whom he had now resided some time, deeply sympathised with him in the dangers of his daring enterprise.

“Brave Roman,” said Malvina, “you are about to risk your life in our service. May the mighty Hu deliver you out of the hands of fierce and cruel men, and bring you safe again within these walls. As the winter has wrapped all things in his icy shroud, you will find the way long and dreary. Here is a pair of new sandals for your feet, and a warm mantle, which will shelter you from the cold blast and the drifting snow-storm. They are small tokens of regard for your generous bravery. I would they were more worthy. May you be preserved from the evils with which your path will be encompassed !”

Octavius received the gifts in silence ; for at this moment he could not speak without betraying too much emotion. His heart was too full of gratitude to Cassibelan, and to those from whom he had so long received daily hospitality, to speak with that calmness and self-possession which became a brave man. He was also oppressed with the thought, that in a few hours perhaps he should take a final farewell of his Catte friends. The burden of his heart was made heavier, too, at this moment by the altered manner of Mingala, who was always so sprightly and so gay, but whose appearance was now exceedingly dejected. She advanced towards him, and putting a few withered leaves into his hand, said in a melancholy voice, as she looked at him with a tearful eye :

“ Generous Roman, take this precious charm. It will shield you from danger in the hour of peril. Keep it, and you will live to return safe to the homes of the Catte.”

The charm offered by this gentle British girl to Octavius had a value in his eyes, distinct from that attributed to it by superstition. It was to him as sweet and welcome as the refreshing odour of the fragrant flower of the wilderness to the weary traveller ; and it gave him a new relish for life even in captivity.

The charm was a piece of selago or hedge-hysop, which the Druids had gathered with great care and ceremony. "Nothing of iron (as too base a metal) was to touch or cut it, nor was the bare hand thought worthy of that honour, but a peculiar vesture or sagus* applied by means of the right hand; the vesture must have been holy, and taken off from some sacred person privately, and with the left hand only. The gatherer was to be clothed in white, his feet naked and washed in pure water. He was first to offer a sacrifice of bread and wine, before he proceeded to gather the selago, which was carried from the place of its nativity in a clean new napkin. This was preserved as a charm by the Druids against all misfortune."†

* The saic : see note at p. 39.

† Borlase's *Cornwall*, p. 95.

CHAPTER XIII.

OCTAVIUS set out the next morning with the first gleams of light on his adventurous journey. His guides were a slave, appointed by Cassibelan, and Cormo, who accompanied him by his own desire. Octavius saw a token of friendship to himself and kindness to the slave in Condidan's ready consent to the wishes of Cormo. The state of bondage in ancient times was a species of servitude, in which indeed the bondsman had no free choice of master or place ; but in all other respects it was very different to the deplorable lot of the poor slave of the present age. But the better condition of these unfortunate persons was no excuse for the wrong they suffered ; and though many were comparatively content with their lot, the greater part no doubt, like Taxmillan and Cormo, sighed for the privileges of freemen.

As Octavius journeyed on to-day, his thoughts for a long time reverted to the inmates of the dwelling he had quitted. He felt like one who had a second time left his home, with little hope of ever returning. The hospitality of Condidan

and kind treatment of Malvina and her daughter, the pleasing companionship of Segonax and the generous protection of Cassibelan, all dwelt on his mind; and as he meditated on their friendship, a despondent feeling crept over him. Perhaps he might never see Ver again; for it was even more than probable that he might fall a victim to the sudden anger of the Trinobantes, as their bard and chief had done, to the violence of the Catte. And if not, but should return to Ver, he might yet be offered on the blood-stained altar of the Druids. In the midst of youth and health, when life is commonly radiant with the sunshine of hope, his prospect was obscured by a cloud, dark and portentous; and his spirits were bowed down with misgivings and anxiety.

Cormo saw the melancholy thoughtfulness of Octavius, and believing that it partly proceeded from the Roman's apprehensions of an unsuccessful issue of his enterprise, endeavoured to amuse him by long accounts of past disputes and wars between the two tribes. But in his simple earnestness, he did not see that the history he gave was ill calculated to effect his object.

The day was calm, but heavy clouds were slowly moving up from the horizon, and threatened an approaching storm. The country was

dreary, either consisting of woods, open heaths, or swamps. No traces of human skill or industry met the eye; no houses scattered here and there, nor human form broke upon the solitary scene. The appearance of a herd of wild cattle, of the huge deer, the wild boar, or fierce wolf, which then roamed over the land, were almost the only signs of life, during the desolation of a winter's reign in the wildernesses of Britain. Now, how changed is the same district! The cottages of the husbandmen, seats of the wealthy, villages and towns, are scattered over what was then almost impassable forest, and frequently flooded valleys and marshes, through which our travellers had, with much difficulty, to wend their way towards Trinow. Even the most sequestered nooks are now thick set with tokens of the improving hand of man. Truly the wilderness has become a fair and fertile land, abounding in riches, and teeming with delights.

At noon, on passing the landmark of the last Catte chief, the travellers knew that they were entering on the district of the Trinobantes; and Cormo pointed to a part of the forest before them, in which stood a small town of that tribe. On entering the territories of another people, Octavius inverted his spear, and carried it with the point backwards, as a sign that he was not bent

on hostile intentions. This was a necessary custom, in an age when each suspected a foe in every stranger he met; especially if far distant from human habitations.

As daylight was fading away, the travellers reached the verge of the elevated ground, over which they had journeyed for some time, and beheld before them an extensive and wooded plain, on which, at some distance, stood the town of Trinow, stretched along the margin of a river. It consisted, like Ver, of a number of huts of the usual form and size, irregularly placed, and interspersed with scattered clumps of trees, dark patches of underwood, and pools of standing water. On the north it was flanked by an extensive forest, and bounded by a noble river on the south; in which direction, at this season, it overflowed its banks, presenting a large tract of low swampy country.

Such was the original site and neighbourhood of the now mighty metropolis of England, unrivalled in extent, wealth, and magnificence. Mean sheds and rude huts then occupied spots on which now stands some gorgeous building, or some stately and commodious mansion. No majestic works of art, the glorious monuments of the genius of civilised man, were then seen. Luxury and elegance

were alike unknown; and not a single bridge of the rudest form connected the opposite banks of that river, which is now spanned by so many magnificent structures, perfect in design, and beautiful in execution.

Innumerable religious temples now meet the eye, where then was seen, placed on the verge of the forest, a rude circle of earth or stones,* in which the inhabitants assembled to perform their religious rites. Carriages of various forms, designed either for utility or pleasure, now ceaselessly roll over spots which were then only crossed occasionally by the terrific war-chariots, or the ill-shapen carrus, laden with the few and simple articles of barter then in use.

Commerce, bounded only by the limits of the world, numerous arts, brought to a wonderful state of perfection, and endless diversities of occupation, are pursued on the spots where rude men exchanged a few of the necessaries of life, and where they plied a few mechanic trades, then in the earliest stage of their progress. Human beings, clothed in garments of various hues and shapes, some of costly fabric and of exquisite workmanship, frequent the spots where the Celtic race once wandered in skins and uncouth garbs of

* Probably on or near the site of St. Paul's.

simple form and material. That which is now the gathering-place of men from every clime, was then the residence of a small British tribe.

In the vast modern metropolis, the ceaseless hum of busy men is heard from early dawn to late watches of the night; whereas the small town of Trinow presented little more excitement and bustle than a modern village. The adjacent forest, haunted by the ferocious wolf and wild boar, has disappeared; and a large portion of the district it occupied is now studded with populous villages, and abodes of every elegance and comfort which almost boundless wealth can furnish. Trinow was the humble work of the children of the forest; London is the mighty and magnificent creation of a race of men, exalted by the accumulated knowledge, experience, and wealth of many centuries.

In the winter season travelling was extremely difficult and laborious; and as there were no roads or bridges, Octavius and his companions had been obliged to make a circuitous route; and spent the whole day in performing the journey. They entered Trinow as the slaves were penning sheep, and driving cattle to their sheds. A Trinobante conducted them, at their request, to the king's abode. Trials, which seem at first sight beyond human endurance, are often entered upon with

intrepidity, and borne with firmness. When Octavius stood before Mandubrace and his chiefs, who had just returned from boar-hunting, he was calm and collected. To anxiety had succeeded self-command; and the future was forgotten in the all-absorbing interest of the present.

"Son of a hero, chief of a brave nation," said Octavius, addressing the king, "I come from the Catte tribe, and am the bearer to you of weighty tidings."

"Speak on, and let your words be few and chosen," answered Mandubrace impatiently, as he drew nearer to examine him more closely. Ill lighted as the dwelling was, he immediately perceived that one of a strange land stood before him, and with surprise exclaimed, "Who are you? No Catte, no Briton!"

"I am a Roman," returned Octavius, "and served as a chief in the army of Julius Cæsar. Wounded, and left for dead, I fell into the hands of the Catte, and have since remained a captive among them."

"Roman, Cassibelan has wronged you," replied Mandubrace. "By the treaty of peace, made by the chiefs of these lands and your commander, you ought to have been restored to him. My counsel is, that you return not to Ver, and

trust not again to the crafty Catte. Remain with me, and on the faith of a warrior, I promise to send you safely to your people."

However tempting the thought of freedom might be, Octavius could not act dishonourably to Cassibelan. He felt himself bound to execute the business on which he had come, and return to Ver, and make known to the Catte the success or failure of his mission. Besides, he thought Mandubrace's promise was rather too hastily given to a stranger to be worthy of much reliance, especially on calling to mind his antipathy to Cassibelan. Time, he believed, would disclose some selfish motive on the part of Mandubrace, were he to accept his offer, which, however, he at once declined, and resolved to communicate the tidings he brought, and depart homewards as soon as he could; and with all the fortitude he could command, patiently await the evils which might befall him at Ver.

"Noble Trinobante," he answered, "I owe you many thanks for your generous proposal; but I am pledged to return to Cassibelan, who, during my captivity, has shewn me much hospitality. I would not be ungrateful to him nor deceive him. Let me, then, O king, disclose the sad message which I bear to you. Know, son of

Imanuentis, that your chief was well treated by his captors, and only detained by them until he should be ransomed. When your sacred son of song arrived at Ver, he entered the hall of Cassibelan in the midst of a feast. Your chief was there sharing in the festivities." Octavius went on to relate the events already detailed; but, on making known the death of the bard and chief, he could add no more. A burst of indignant surprise, horror, and passion interrupted him, and filled the house with a deafening uproar; and, in the scene of violence which followed, it was a useless attempt to reason with furious men.

The cry of "War, war! revenge, revenge! death to our enemies!" broke forth from every tongue, amidst the brandishing of spears by wrathful men.

"Seize the Catte!" shouted Mandubrace. But this command was more easily given than obeyed; for the slaves, well knowing they would be the immediate victims of the fury which was kindling, had fled with the swiftness of an arrow. A general rush to the door in pursuit of them was instantly made. But the darkness of night had now settled over the town, and favoured the escape of the Catte. Octavius was borne along in the crowd of angry men, who, in their impatience and confusion, seized on each other, in mistake for those

they sought. While struggling to free himself from the Trinobante, he lost his mantle; and soon after received a wound on the shoulder, against which the mantle would have been a protection, as it was made of a thick felt.* In a few moments after, he was struck down, just as he heard Mandubrace calling, "Suffer not the Roman to escape. Seize him, but do him no harm."

Women now mingled in the affray, and bearing about in their hands blazing firebrands, soon shewed the warriors the folly of the tumult, as the Catte were gone, and the Roman stretched helpless on the earth. He was raised up and carried into the house.

Mandubrace was anxious to know whether he was mortally wounded. With this view, he carefully examined the injury which the prisoner had received, but found it was not very serious. Octavius remained wholly passive in the hands of the Trinobantes, having resolved to counterfeit a state of insensibility; by which scheme, if he could carry

* "The Gauls, and perhaps the Britons, manufactured a kind of cloth, or rather felt, of wool, without either spinning or weaving." "This cloth or felt is said to have been so strong and firm, when vinegar was used in making it, that it resisted the blow of a sword, and was even some defence against fire." Henry's *Hist.* vol. ii. p. 127.

it out successfully, he hoped to effect his escape. A few words which had fallen from a person, whom he suspected to be a Druid, encouraged him to make the attempt.

"The Roman will come to himself shortly," was the remark which Octavius heard, and resolved to profit by; "he is only stunned by the fall."

"Dress his wound with all thy skill, wise Colmar," answered Mandubrace; "he shall yet render me good service. He must not return to Ver, but shall help us to take vengeance on the Catte. He knows their strength, and perhaps their designs; and this knowledge will be useful to me, and we will find means to extort it from him."

Octavius, from these observations, clearly saw the motives which had led Mandubrace to offer him freedom; and he saw also how little chance there was of the performance of the promise, unless he played a treacherous part towards the hospitable Catte, which he resolved never to do, even if the loss of liberty and life should be the result.

Octavius very soon saw reason to rejoice in the plan which he had determined to adopt; for the Trinobantes, feeling assured that in his present state he was unconscious of all that was passing around him, began to converse freely, especi-

ally after they had shared in their usual festive meal. Bitter imprecations and vows of vengeance were reiterated. To these succeeded a long discussion, regarding a scheme suggested by one of the speakers, for taking revenge on all the Catte tribe; and it was finally settled to begin the attack at the weakest town of the district. From thence it was planned to pass on to the next, to capture or disarm as many of the warriors as they could, and to lay waste their homes; and lastly, to attack Ver, which they hoped also to take by surprise, and plunder.

“If our scheme should be a successful one,” cried Mandubrace, “the Catte will have greater cause for bitter wailing, and will suffer heavier woe, than when the great Cæsar entered their town.”

This allusion to the Roman general brought their new captive to their thoughts, and Octavius, by the close examination he underwent, found himself again an object of suspicion; but so well did he counterfeit a state of insensibility, that the conversation was renewed with the same freedom. As he heard it gravely and authoritatively stated, that previously to entering on any project the will of the Divine powers must be learned, he found that Druids were present. The new year being

close at hand, it was resolved to usher it in with the accustomed ceremonies. When others expressed a fear that delay would be prejudicial to their success, the same voices reminded them that the Catte must perform the same duties before entering on any important enterprise. This assurance seemed to satisfy the most impetuous; and no further fears were expressed, except with respect to a store of corn, garnered up in a spot where a portion of the tribe dwelt, and which was incidentally mentioned.

Octavius gave an attentive ear to this piece of information, and was glad to find that most of the company were of opinion that the Catte would not attack so insignificant a place, especially as it had never been used before as a storehouse; and therefore the secret was not likely to be known to any out of the tribe, as but a few even of the Trinobantes were acquainted with the circumstance.

The evening being now far spent, the chiefs began to depart to their homes; and in a short time all became quiet within the dwelling. But Octavius waited an hour or two, before he dared to think of making any attempt at escape. He listened for a long while to the tokens of sound repose of all within the dwelling, and at length ventured to sit up. Another hour passed in watch-

fulness, during which the indistinct mutterings and frequent startings of some, whose sleep was disturbed by dreams, it might be of the tidings he had brought from Ver, finally subsided into a profound slumber.

The wind murmured dismally without the abode, and he thought of the gloomy wilderness around the town, in which he must wander until daybreak should befriend him. He deeply regretted his separation from his companions, without whose guidance he scarcely hoped to reach Ver; and much did he lament the loss of the mantle, which would have sheltered him from the piercing coldness of the night. But being persuaded, that if the attempt were made at all, the time was now at hand, he endeavoured to rise from the rushy floor. His limbs had become stiff from remaining so long perfectly immovable, while counterfeiting a state of insensibility, and he feared the pain of his wound would retard his flight.

Having gained his feet, Octavius surveyed the slumbering group, just distinguishable by the faint rays of moonlight which entered by the large aperture in the roof, designed for the egress of smoke. He looked carefully around for the doorway, which he saw was not far from him. Having traced with his eye the steps he must take to avoid the sleep-

ers, he cautiously reached the door without the slightest disturbance, and thence looked anxiously around to assure himself that he was not observed. Moving his fingers up and down the edge of the doorway, he soon found the wooden latch, the only fastening used in primitive times in the highest chieftain's abode.

At this instant a start from one of the sleepers threw him into great trepidation, and almost sent him back to his place of repose. But a slight pause satisfied him of the profound slumber of all in the dwelling; and opening the door with extreme care, he stepped forth into the cold moonlight. Apprehensive that the sudden gust of wind which had rushed in on his opening the door, might awaken some of the sleepers, and so lead to his detection and ruin, he gently closed it, and stood and listened for awhile, and found that all was silent.

Octavius had scarcely rejoiced for a moment in his good fortune, before he saw at a slight distance a dark and almost shapeless form in the shadow of the building. He strained his eyes to examine carefully the object, not daring to advance a step; but he at length became convinced that it was a human being, crouched down, apparently to avoid observation. It immediately occurred to Octavius,

that as no one would be out on so cold a night from choice, it was a trusty slave placed there by Mandubrace to watch the door of his dwelling ; and if so, discovery was certain, and escape hopeless. And what treatment could he expect from the Trinobantes, who would naturally be provoked at his deception, and at the preference which he was giving to their enemies?

He stood motionless, scarcely daring to breathe, and anxiously meditating on some plan of concealment. As one idea after another rapidly floated through his mind, the figure arose, and in a few strides stood beside him. A feeling of terror ran through his frame as it approached him, which completely unnerved him, and rendered him powerless and speechless. Hope fled, and despair seized on him, and he felt himself once more a prisoner, when the object who stood by him whispered in his ear, "My good Roman master, how many cold and weary hours have I watched for you! When I saw you steal out, my heart bounded with joy."

Welcome as the cooling breeze to the feverish brow, as the sight of land to the storm-buffeted mariner, were these words to the ear of Octavius. It was verily the faithful Cormo, whose love for his friend would not allow him to pursue his flight,

but kept him hovering around the dwelling in which the Roman was lodged, in the feeble hope of being able to aid him in his escape, if he should attempt one.

He laid his hand gently on Octavius, to prevent a word in reply; and they crept on stealthily amongst the huts and trees and sheepfolds of the quiet town of Trinow. No watch were then needed to stroll about the streets, like so many spirits of darkness, during the livelong night. Its inhabitants slumbered in greater safety with unbarred doors, than is now enjoyed by those who dwell in houses guarded by a thousand ingenious contrivances! And whence sprung this confiding trust of early times? From a virtue, in vigorous existence in those ages, when the members of a tribe dwelt together in the simplicity and mutual confidence of almost patriarchal days. The poor were, indeed, dependent on the rich; but, except in times of famine, they were not subject to pressing or painful want; and had no urgent temptation to purloinings. For whilst there was rude plenty in the chief's abode, the homes of the poor were seldom destitute of a sufficiency of food. The accumulation of wealth, and the luxurious living of after times, were then unknown; and as a much greater equality then existed among the

members of a community, there was less cause for discontent and dishonesty.

The travellers soon passed the rude ramparts of the town, and were once again in the lonely forest, where they could breathe more freely, and speak without fear. Cormo informed Octavius that he had lost his companion in the moment of escape; that he had not fled from Mandubrace's house till he knew he could be of no service to the Roman; and that he had not left the town, neither had he intended to do so, while there remained a chance for Octavius to recover his liberty. Favoured by the cloudiness of the early part of the night, Cormo had lingered among the houses, and gathered from words he had overheard, that Octavius was a prisoner. He immediately resolved to watch Mandubrace's door until day-break, being confident that if the Roman were able, he would escape, when his enemies should have fallen asleep.

Cormo, having concluded his explanations to Octavius, was seized by one of those sudden freaks of joy so common with rude men, who have less equanimity of mind, and are more subject to the extremes of merriment or depression, than the disciplined mind of civilised man. Cormo bounded forward, leaped, clapped his hands, and shouted

with delight at the safety of one for whom he had a very great regard. Octavius, who had scarcely recovered from the shock, which the first sight of the crouching form of Cormo had given him, was startled at this sudden outbreak, and warned his joyous companion that they were not yet beyond the reach of their enemies.

“Fear not,” said Cormo, “they will not miss you until the morning; and before that time, if we do not loiter, we may be far on our way.”

Octavius, however, soon found that he could not continue to hurry on as he desired, and in compliance with the wishes of his companion, but must have a few hours' rest; for his wound had bled long and freely, and he was becoming weak and exhausted; and the snow, moreover, which had now begun to fall fast, drifted in their faces. Cormo, eager to get farther distant from Trinow, strongly opposed all delay; but, on calling to mind that a brave man, like the Roman, would never shrink from any fatigue which he could possibly sustain, he yielded to the persuasions of Octavius, and commenced a search for some place of shelter. With his native quickness, Cormo soon found a hollow tree, the cavity of which was sufficiently capacious to shelter the two travellers. Octavius, with his faithful companion, gladly en-

tered this refuge from the storm, which began to rage with greater violence; and here, tolerably protected from the inclement weather, they passed the next few hours.

CHAPTER XIV.

LONG before the dawn, Cormo urged the necessity, as the storm had ceased, of renewing their flight with all speed; but Octavius, unlike his companion, who had slept well and was quite recruited, was but little refreshed by the short rest they had taken. His wound had kept him awake, and want of food and anxiety of mind had thrown him into that lethargic state, which rendered him averse to exertion, and almost indifferent to the consequences of further delay. Cormo used all his eloquence before he could rouse him from this morbid condition; and was obliged to remind him, more than once, of the probability of the Trinobantes being soon out in pursuit of him, before he could draw him forth from their resting-place.

After they had proceeded a short way, Octavius felt his languor wearing off; but still it required all his strength to keep up with the athletic Cormo. The heavy snow which had fallen, had given such a new face to the country, that Octavius, as soon as daylight permitted him to notice the altered appearance of the scene, was

fearful they might not keep, through the trackless waste, the most direct way to Ver. But many a tree, and shrub, and streamlet were familiar to the Briton; and about noon they reached the first Catte landmark, which they had passed the preceding day about the same hour.

Octavius felt his weary limbs nerved with new strength, as soon as he was once more in the district of the Catte, and fear gave way to a sense of security; and though this pleasurable feeling was, in some degree, chilled by the remembrance of his critical position in Ver, yet "hope, which springs eternal in the human breast," urged him to hasten onwards. At this time, also, the events which had lately occurred tended to strengthen his confidence in the continued protection of Cassibelan, and the further good-will of the chiefs. For, if he had not succeeded in conciliating Mandubrace, which perhaps none expected, he had fulfilled the main object of his mission, and had also gained some information, which, he trusted, would be of important service to the Catte.

While the twilight of a winter's day was throwing its hazy dimness over the land, the travellers passed the earthy barriers of Ver, and were once more among the quiet homes of the tribe. As the members of Condidan's family were express-

ing their fears that the Roman would never return to tell his tale, Octavius entered their abode, and stood for a moment near Malvina unobserved, who, together with her daughter, was making garments of skins. Both were lamenting his supposed death, which was generally believed, in consequence of the report of the violent proceedings of the Trinobantes, brought by the fugitive slave in the early part of the day.

Octavius was a willing listener to the sympathy and regret with which both were speaking of him, until Mingala, on looking up, uttered an exclamation of terror. Influenced by the superstitions of the age to believe that the shades of the dead frequently hovered about the scenes of their earthly existence, Mingala, on beholding the pale features of Octavius in the dim light of the dwelling, clung to her mother, imagining she beheld the spirit of the Roman. Malvina, who immediately looked up from her rude needlework, saw the groundless nature of her daughter's fears. The Roman had indeed returned, but in no "questionable shape;" and this conviction was confirmed too by the joyous visage of Cormo peering over the shoulders of Octavius. Malvina now quickly arose, as she said, "Welcome home, good Roman. I rejoice to see that you have escaped from the violence of the enemy."

A skin was quickly spread for his repose, and the domestics ran to and fro to execute the orders of their mistress. The news of his return soon circulated through the town, and the house was speedily filled with chiefs, eager to hear the tidings that Octavius had brought from their enemies. Among the inquirers none could be more anxious than Cassibelan, though he shewed far less impatience; and learning that the Roman was wounded and exhausted, he proposed to wait a while until Octavius was refreshed, and had in some degree recovered from his fatigue.

The Roman, however, wanted not to keep his generous protector in suspense, but hastened to inform him, and the chiefs who were present, of every incident connected with his late visit to Trinow. The stratagem by which he had gained a knowledge of the plots of the Trinobantes, and effected his escape, drew forth general praise; for successful wariness and adroitness were qualities in great esteem among British warriors. But their warmest encomiums gave him far less pleasure than a few words of commendation from the wise Cassibelan, who soon also afterwards testified his friendship for Octavius in a more marked manner; for while the chiefs still continued to keep the weary Roman in conversation for their own gratification,

forgetful of his pain and fatigue, the thoughtful and generous-hearted king of the Catte secretly withdrew from the house, but to return, after a short absence, with a Druid, who was famed for his skill in the healing art. The sage examined and dressed the wound, and uttered those mystic words which, together with the observance of certain forms, were supposed to charm away all bodily ills. Over this Druid the king had more influence than over Casbar; and through his judicious treatment, Octavius, in a few hours, was relieved of much pain, and on the morrow, after a good night's rest, felt able to be out among the Catte.

War being now inevitable, it was Cassibelan's policy to be first on the war-path. No step, however, could be taken without the consent of the Druids, to whom indeed the success of their own tribe was as important as to the Catte people. They summoned the inhabitants of Ver to the temple on the following day for worship and sacrifice; and after the conclusion of the usual auguries, they announced the omens to be favourable to the taking up of arms for their defence against the wrath and suspected violence of their enemies.

After this auspicious commencement, the first step taken was to send out the crantara, which

consisted of a stick burnt at one end, and dipped in the blood of a goat at the other, by a swift-footed messenger to the first township he could reach. His duty was to deliver it at the nearest chief's abode, with no words but the day and hour and place of meeting. The same stick was then conveyed in a similar manner by a fresh herald to the next place, and in this way the information was speedily spread throughout the whole district of the tribe.

This felicitous mode of sending messages was used even in the last century, and which are said to have been carried over a tract of upwards of thirty miles in three hours.* The crantara betokened destruction, by fire and sword, to those chiefs who neglected to appear at the appointed spot and time, with their followers equipped for battle. But an act of disobedience of this nature was of rare occurrence among men always ready for war, and happened only when the chiefs were dissatisfied with their leader. Cassibelan, however, was extremely popular, and his warriors frequently obeyed his summons without knowing the tribe they were to oppose, or the ground on which the war was undertaken.

* In the rebellion in Scotland in 1745.

Three days subsequent to the return of Octavius to Ver, the warriors' movements were fixed to commence. This delay was necessary for making the usual preparations, and for the ushering in of the new year with the usual solemnities. Meanwhile the war-chariots were drawn from their resting places, and the chiefs and their followers were busily employed in making ready for the battle-strife.

All ages and both sexes engaged with joyful alacrity in these occupations, being animated with that martial spirit so commonly cherished by barbaric tribes. The peaceful pursuits, associated with patriarchal days, were despised, and had long been abandoned by the male sex; and the tillage of the soil, and the tending of flocks were tasks imposed on the women, or performed by the slave class. False ideas of the true objects of human existence, mistaken views of happiness, and a familiarity with cruel practices, led to a disregard of human suffering, and a low estimate of the value of human life. The records of heathen nations shew but too plainly that civilisation makes a very slow, and in some cases no progress, when all classes are subject to the influences of a gross idolatry and puerile and debasing superstitions; and hence the last page of their history is often

as deeply stained with cruelty as the first, in consequence of the powers of the intellect and the passions of the soul being wholly diverted from useful and honourable pursuits, and employed in the chase and the strifes of war.

CHAPTER XV.

ON the eve of the day esteemed the first of the new year, Octavius witnessed a simple and touching ceremony. It was a custom among the Britons for aged warriors to resign their arms, when they were no longer able to bear them against the enemy, and this was called "fixing the arms." The prevalent love of war, and the high esteem in which all brave men were held, gave importance to this simple ceremony; and the eve of a new war was considered a fitting occasion for its celebration.

Lathmon, the father of Condidan, who was the most aged chief in Ver, had become wholly incapacitated for the pursuits of war. Yet up to this period he had deferred laying aside the profession of a warrior, which he so highly valued. But he yielded now to the persuasions of Cassibelan, who intended to address his chiefs at the close of the day, and more especially the young men, who were candidates for the profession of arms, on

whom he desired to make a serious impression of the important duties, as well as honourable rank, to which they were aspiring.

Lathmon came at the appointed time, attended by Condidan and the bard of the clan, together with his sons and daughters. They approached in a somewhat reluctant and sorrowful manner; for the old man had reminded them of the truth that, as a warrior, they must henceforth regard him as dead; and the mournfulness of his words had touched their hearts with a sadness similar to that with which they would follow him to the last long home.

Cassibelan sat near the door of his dwelling, surrounded by his warriors, who fell back to open a road for the hero and his clan; and the king arose from his seat, and advanced a few steps to meet them. All observed a profound silence, whilst the shield, the battle-axe, the hunting-knife, and finally the spear, upon which the old man leant for the last time, were laid one after another on the ground; and Lathmon received a staff, which should henceforth be the support of his now enfeebled frame. He bent over the objects, alike the pride of the warrior and the hunter, for a few moments in silence, and then lifting up his eyes, he surveyed the assembly with that placidity

of manner, which peculiarly belongs to age in its dim day of sorrow.

“ Son of a hero, brave and noble Cassibelan,” Lathmon said, in a mournful voice ; “ these arms I have often borne on the war-path by the side of thy father. From him I received them with pride and hope. To thee I resign them in weakness and sorrow. Fain would I have closed these eyes on the battle-field, in the midst of the light of renown ! But I have been spared to pass through the summer of life, and to advance far into the winter of age. Years roll on, and seasons return with new vigour and beauty ; but the strength and glory of man lasts only a single summer, and then returns no more. The storm sweeps through the forest, and the stately tree, decked with leaves and beauty, falls beneath its violence ; and for a few hours men lament its stricken vigour and stateliness. So it will be with me. ‘ I moulder alone in my place.’ The blasts of years have withered my branches, and as the breeze of evening dies away, so will my voice fail and soon be heard no more, and my ‘ footsteps will cease to be seen.’ Happy are they who die in the noble conflict of the brave, while their renown is fresh in the memory of man. The remembrance of their deeds will live in song. But the fame of the aged

withers away with their strength, and the deeds of their youth are already forgotten. 'Joy gathers around their tomb,' and the mound of their fame 'is reared without a tear.' Noble Cassibelan, son of a hero, may glory shine upon thy path in life, and rest on thy narrow house in death. Chieftains, whom I have seen spring up from childhood, be brave in the chase, and before the face of the enemy. Young men, follow me in the path of my early fame. Let your renown in battle be greater than mine, so that heroes perish not from our land. And may your sun set amid the brightness of valorous deeds."

"Warrior of many years," answered Cassibelan, "grief stirs in my heart at the thought that thou canst no longer bear those arms on the war-path. But the close of a life passed in gathering wisdom and renown is honourable. Put away thy fears; thy fame shall never die. The Catte bards shall tell to future times, that thy valour was great in danger, and 'that thou wert never pale with fear,' nor 'told thy name to a foe.*' Be comforted; for though 'the darkness

* In the early ages warriors sometimes entered into solemn leagues or covenants of peace with each other, and these engagements were binding on their posterity. Hence, when warriors of different tribes or countries were about to enter into conflict,

of age comes like a mist of the desert,' the rest of thy days shall be tranquil. Thy end shall approach thee as sleep comes to the weary traveller."

"Lathmon," said Casbar, "the king hath well spoken. Thy name shall live in story, and be embalmed in song; and when men see thy stone, they will say of thee, 'There lies the brave of other days.' And should thy name pass away from the memories of men, there would yet be consolation for the darkening years of thy life. Lathmon hath been as just and faithful as he hath been wise in council. The pride of victory never drove the fear of the Just Ones from thy heart. Thou hast not forgotten to bear tribute to their altars. Old man, thou hast seen the vanity of life. If the praise of men hath been welcome to thee in thy youth, thou knowest now that it brings small comfort in age. Let better thoughts bring thee light and peace. Grieve not that thou must die on the rushy floor amidst thy kindred, and not on the blood-stained sod, far from thy

they did not tell their names to each other, as this might have disclosed some event which would have prevented hostilities between them; and he who did so was esteemed a coward, as the natural inference was, that he desired to evade the chances of a contest with an unknown foe.

home. Let the hope live in thy heart, that though the wise and valiant, as well as the cowardly and rebellious, must go down into the darkness of the grave, they shall quickly pass out of it into the bright far-off lands of renowned heroes."

As his age placed him above all except the king and Druid, none else in the assembly presumed to address the old chief on this solemn occasion. The arms were taken up in silence and carried by Condidan into his own house, where, in the presence of Cassibelan and a few chiefs, they were arranged on the walls. Lathmon followed each weapon to its final resting-place with a deep sigh, and when the ceremony of fixing the arms was concluded, he sat down in his place by the central fire, from which he knew his future wanderings would be few and short.

Cassibelan and the chiefs returned to the assembly, in the open air, to call forward those young men, who had now arrived at the age in which they were permitted to enter on the duties of manhood. Arms were given to them by the king, accompanied with suitable admonitions. They were enjoined to "pursue the glory of their fathers, and be what they had been." "To have no fear of death, but to fear to fly." They were exhorted to earn for themselves the honour-

able name of valiant warriors in the coming warfare.*

The young men received the weapons with evident pride and joy ; and performed the deiseal around the king and Druid, as a token and pledge of their future respect and obedience. Their thoughts and feelings, unlike those of the aged warrior, were buoyant and bright. As yet the severe lessons of disappointment had given to them no melancholy tint. Youth, like the traveller who is setting out to an unknown land, is unwilling to heed the tale of toil, vicissitude, and peril, which preceding adventurers have oft related. It is only by self-experience that the chequered nature of human life is truly known and realised. The simple ceremony of fixing the arms was calculated to impress on the minds of a rude people the evanescent nature of their earthly being, and to prepare them to solemnise the entrance of a new year with even more than their customary awe and veneration.

* According to Dr. Henry, the Britons did not give their sons a name until they had performed some brave action. The foundation of this opinion rests on the authority of Baxter and Ossian ; and it is also inferred from the circumstance, that all the British names mentioned by Greek and Roman writers, and by the British bards, bear some meaning in the British language significant of physical or moral qualities and actions.

The Britons, like many early nations, commenced the new year* on the sixth day of the moon's age; but at what season of the year is somewhat uncertain, though the evidence is in favour of that moon which fell nearest the winter solstice. Each month began on the same day of the moon. The festival which ushered in the new year was held in honour of Hu, the supreme deity of the Britons. And it is not a little singular that religious rites, blended with feastings and rejoic-

* The new-year's day of the Britons is involved in obscurity. Pliny places it in July; Toland on the 10th of March; and other writers have fixed it about the time of the winter solstice, the heathen birthday of Sol, which the Druids undoubtedly kept as a festival. It is highly probable that the Britons had no precise day, but were guided by the age of the moon, the sixth day being that on which the mistletoe was gathered; and as this custom of gathering the mistletoe at the commencement of the year has descended to the present era, it seems probable that the new year's day of the Britons was about the period at which it is now kept. The new year has commenced on various days in different centuries and different countries; as on Christmas-day, on 1st of January, on 25th of March, on Easter-day, and even on 12th of August. No uniformity prevailed respecting this important circumstance, even among the nations of Europe, until a very recent period. In this country the year began on Christmas-day from the seventh century until the thirteenth century, when it was fixed for 25th March, from which day the Church had for a century preceding reckoned the new year to begin. This practice continued until 1752, when a final change was made to the 1st of January.

ings, have, from the most remote times, distinguished the mid-winter season. Relics of this practice have descended through all ages to the present times; and have been mingled with religion in every form, the Christian not excepted.

One of the most important rites of this period, among the Celtic race, was the gathering of the mistletoe;* and a vestige of this custom still lingers in the Christian homes of England. The Druids always cut the plant from the tree on the sixth day of the moon's age, and as they prized it only when it grew on the oak, a tree sacred to their supreme divinity, diligent search for this plant was always made previous to the festival. On the present occasion, it had been found a few miles from Ver, upon the sacred tree.

* The Druids venerated the mistletoe, the egg, and the crescent, for the same reason that they venerated the various stone monuments already noticed. The mistletoe is a "singular parasitical shrub," found sometimes on apple-trees, and more rarely on the oak. The Druids valued *that* only which grew on this latter tree. The oak has been held in great esteem by many nations. The Grecians had their vocal groves of oaks; and the Arcadians thought that stirring the waters with an oaken bough would "produce rain." The Jews were also strongly infected with an idolatrous veneration for the oak. A superstitious regard for the mistletoe was widely spread over the ancient world; and even at a later era, a peculiar importance is ascribed to it in Scandinavian mythology.

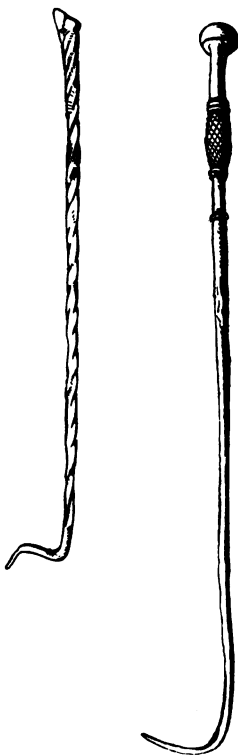
At the dawn of day, from the united voices of all the Druids of the neighbourhood, the cry resounded, "The new year is come; hasten, sons of men, to the gathering of the mistletoe."* Joyfully, yet soberly, the people came forth into the cold air of an early morning of a winter's day, to behold the light of another year.

The Druids enjoined silence, and marshalled the people into ranks. They then proceeded slowly with them from the town; and on their way were joined by many parties of men and women from other dwelling-places in the district, accompanied by their spiritual guides. The procession moved along at a measured pace, as the

* A remnant of the custom of gathering the mistletoe on new-year's day existed in France in the last century. Youths went about through the streets and villages with a branch in their hands, soliciting an offering, and proclaiming the new year. Veneration for this plant was transmitted from generation to generation for many ages after the introduction of Christianity; and even as late as 1719, an eminent physician conceived it to be efficacious in curing epilepsy. But although no longer regarded as of any importance to man, it is still an object of interest to every lover of antiquity; and its association with our Christmas and new-year's festivities is the last link of a long chain of customs, which have extended through vast tracks of time to the present age. We have nearly reached the termination of this long chain, and in a few more years there will be nothing left of ancient usages but their record in works like the present.

mistletoe on the venerated oak was always approached in the most reverent manner. When the people came in sight of the stately tree which bore at the base of its branches the sacred shrub, the Faids went foremost, lifting up their voices in hymns of praise. To them succeeded Dunthalgo, who exercised a supremacy in this district, similar to that which the Arch-Druid did over the whole hierarchy. Dunthalgo carried the golden hook, and Casbar walked by his side, and bore the saic, or white mantle. These two articles were indispensable for the due performance of the important ceremony. Other Druids followed, leading the victims for sacrifice.

A larger number than the customary offerings was this day brought by Cassibelan and his chiefs,



in order more effectually to propitiate the gods. For though they had received permission to prepare for war, they had not yet obtained assurance that the guilt of shedding the blood of the bard was expiated, and that the intended campaign would end successfully. The Druids were tardy in relieving the anxious minds of the Catte and their leader. For they well knew that, by prolonging the fears which superstition excited, they increased the importance of their own office, and the people's sense of dependence on their order. Having brought them to a state of alternating hope and despondency, they intended to-day to rouse and gladden them with the assurance of pardon and favour.

The Druids, perceiving the hurtful influence of war on society, were generally opposed to it. They knew that only a small number of the most successful tribe were enriched by the spoils of victory; while the greater part, even of the victors, were often impoverished. Both parties were injured by the loss of friends and relatives; and even if, on their return home, the conquerors brought a greater amount of tribute to the temple than usual, yet the resources of the people, during the war, were always abridged; and for a long time afterwards, they were often unable to pro-

vide their customary offerings for the altar. But in the present instance, as war with the Trinobantes was inevitable, Casbar and his brethren saw the necessity of exciting Cassibelan and the people to a manful resistance to the expected enemy.

The Druids were necessarily as anxious for victory as the Catte; for though protected by their sacred character from the violence of conquerors, yet the priests of a subjugated tribe could never hope to retain and exercise the same amount of authority, or to have so many and valuable gifts brought to the temple, as those of a free people. Hence rivalships existed even among these learned sages; and they were moved by passions and interests similar to those of the people, all having one common nature. The wonted confidence of the Catte must now be restored, that they might apply all their skill and energy, with the greatest enthusiasm and firmness, to the obtaining of the victory. For the accomplishment of this object the Druids now strove as sedulously to lull fears, as they had previously sought to awaken them.

The people were arranged around the oak, at a sufficient distance to leave an intervening space for the performance of the rites of worship. Within this space, a heap of stones was thrown together to form an altar, which was strewn with oak-

leaves. By a lustration of holy water the Druids purified themselves, the sacrificial utensils, and also the victims, which had been closely examined, to ascertain if they were without spot or blemish.

Two white bulls, which had never been yoked, nor ever had their horns till now bound by a thong, were tied to the venerated tree, around which the Druids performed the deiseal, while the Faids sung the praise of the gods, to whom a prayer was offered, in which they were supplicated to look auspiciously on this gathering of the mistletoe. At the close of the usual preparations, Dunthalmo ascended the oak, from which he cut the sacred plant, not with any base metal, as priests of other



nations did, but with a golden hook. This circumstance, in connexion with some other religious peculiarities, has obtained for the Druids the fame of

possessing "a delicacy superior to that of most of the ancients." *

The mistletoe in its fall was received into the saic, or sacred mantle, and in this it was carefully preserved for the present. The Druids considered, that whatever came in contact with the earth lost its purity, and hence they took special care that the plant should not touch the ground. The usual initiatory rites having been performed, and all things being in readiness, the two white bulls were led to the rude stone altar already alluded to, and were there slain, and placed thereon as a thanksgiving offering for the gift of the mistletoe, the most precious token of the bounty of Hu. The possession of even the smallest fragment of this sacred plant was coveted above all things, it being esteemed a remedy for every ill, and a preservative against every misfortune. The sacrificial part of the worship was concluded, as usual, by sprinkling the blood of the victims upon the people; and at the same time, the joyful news was announced that the anger of the gods was appeased, and the heinous sin, committed by the disastrous death of the bard, was forgiven, and would be no more remembered against them.

In primeval ages a feast usually succeeded the

* Borlase's *Cornwall*, p. 95.

performance of religious rites. The perfect stillness, which had till now been observed by the whole assembly, was followed by the bustle and noise of preparation. Numerous fires were quickly lighted, and the business of making ready the feast immediately began. A third part only of the sacrifices had been consumed on the altar; and of the other two parts, one was reserved for the Druids, and the remainder for the people to feast on.

While the plenteous repast was preparing, the assembly separated into various groups, and passed away the intervening time in the manner which was most agreeable to each. The Druids walked apart, discoursing with each other on those abstruse subjects which they delighted to discuss when they met together. The chiefs gathered round Cassibelan to talk of the war, the subject which now engrossed their thoughts, and in which they would make the first movement on the morrow; and the young amused themselves with the sports and pastimes peculiar to the age and country.

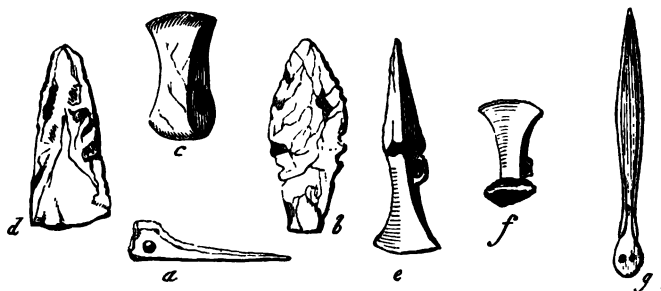
When the feast was ready, the assembly seated themselves in circles round the different fires to partake of the prepared food with more than usual quietness; for the noisy mirth so common in their feasts was restrained by the presence of so many Druids. After two or three hours had passed away

in feasting and conversing about the coming conflict with the Trinobantes, the gradual dying out of the fires, the approach of a winter's night, and the increasing coldness of the breeze, as it played around them, reminded them of home, and the assembly simultaneously prepared to depart.

In this manner the Britons began the new year; and in ordinary circumstances, they continued to feast and revel for several days. But the business of war, in which the Catte were immediately to engage, superseded the feasting and merriment of the holiday season, and all returned homewards to-night, not to enter into the usual fireside sportive enjoyments, but to prepare, by a few hours' rest, for the fatigues and dangers of the war-path.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE in health and strength, man is inclined more or less to activity, and seeks for novelty. In the rude state of British life, there was no pursuit to interest an enterprising mind but that of the chase. This is probably one of the causes that led men in early times to love scenes of war, a pursuit which broke in upon the dull monotony of barbarian life, and offered a field for the exercise of the mental faculties, while it gave ample room for the indulgence of the passions.



a, b, lance-heads of bone, from a barrow, Wilts; *c*, battle-axe head, from a barrow, Devon; *d*, another of flint; *e*, battle-axe head, of earliest form, of bronze; *f*, another bronze head, of improved form; *g*, earliest specimen of spear-blade, bronze.

Early in the morning of the next day, at the sound of the king's horn, every Catte warrior not already abroad seized his arms and hastened to join his leader. The whole war-party in the town were soon collected together, and in the midst of many a farewell and fervent wish for success, poured forth from female hearts, they looked back on their kindred and homes, to which some of them never returned, and pressed on to the ramparts of the town, which they passed with as much joy as when they were setting out on a hunting excursion.

Octavius was in the war-party; but whether this favour had been granted to him for the service which he had rendered the Catte, he could not learn. He greatly rejoiced, however, at being allowed to enter once more on a pursuit to which he had been early trained, and which, in common with the prevailing opinion of the age, he believed to be the noblest in which man could engage.

Accustomed to the order and rigid discipline of the Roman army, Octavius felt surprised how any leader could expect success from the efforts of men, who, like the Catte, were under little or no military restraint. But he presently remembered that they had to oppose men equally ignorant of the tactics of a well-disciplined army; and that

success mainly depended, among the Britons, on personal bravery, physical strength, and dexterity in the individual use of their rude arms. Besides, the Britons were, in this case, as in many others, incited by anger and hatred against their enemies, which greatly increased their enthusiasm; while the Romans were, in most instances, called to fight against nations of whom they knew nothing, and about whom they were perfectly indifferent.

The army, as it proceeded, received many accessions at various appointed places; and every addition was hailed with delight, and gave increasing confidence of a final triumph over their enemies. It was Cassibelan's plan to proceed cautiously, but as speedily as possible, to Trinow, where he expected to find the force of the Trinobantes concentrated; and if so, to give them battle. Or, if the warriors should have left the town, according to a scheme which had been proposed by some of them, and overheard by Octavius, the evening in which he lay wounded in Mandubrace's dwelling, in this case Cassibelan and his party would easily make themselves masters of the place. The king had also provided for frustrating the Trinobante scheme just mentioned, by ordering all the inhabitants of the Catte town, which the enemy had proposed to plunder, to take shelter in

Ver, with all their possessions, and leave nothing but empty huts.

Towards noon, the Catte entered the district of the enemy, and in an unfrequented part of the forest Cassibelan encamped for the remainder of that day and the ensuing night. In the meanwhile he sent forward Segonax and another trusty and enterprising young warrior, who were, if possible, to reach Trinow unseen, and to enter that place as soon as darkness would favour their security. By listening to the conversation of parties who might be abroad, they were to gather what news they could of the movements and purposes of the enemy, and return before day-break to the camp. After having despatched these scouts, a wild goat was captured and slain, and some of its blood sprinkled on the Catte flags. If this custom was observed within the enemy's territories, it was supposed to be favourable to the success of the war-party.

The camp was in the form of a circle, and bounded by the war-chariots,* which served as an

* The Britons are said to have had six varieties of wheel-carriages. The carrus, esseda, rheda, covinus, benna, and peritovum. The use of the first of these has already been explained. The esseda and rheda are supposed to have accommodated more than one person. The covinus is described by antiquarians as a light

encompassing barrier, both against the approach of savage animals, and a sudden attack of the enemy. After several hours had been spent in anxious conversation, the time for repose arrived, and the warriors wrapped themselves in their mantles, and lay down around the camp-fires, for a few hours' sleep. There were two, however, to whom, sleep that night was scarcely welcome, Cassibelan and Condidan. The king spent many hours walking to and fro in the camp, and as he was exceedingly anxious for the return of the scouts, he was frequently asking the guards, as the night advanced, if they heard the approach of footsteps. The father of Segonax was equally anxious for the return of his son and his companion from Trinow, knowing that while they remained in that place, they would be in imminent danger of being discovered and

carriage, armed at the end of the axles and other prominent parts with scythes or hooks. Some authors have doubted whether any war-chariot had those formidable appendages, as neither Cæsar nor Tacitus, nor any early writer, mentions the circumstance, except Pomponius Mela, who, however, wrote in the first century. Iron instruments have, indeed, been found on the sites of ancient battles, which agree in form with these supposed weapons, one of which measured thirteen inches in length. The benna and peritovum are imagined by some authors to have been travelling carriages; but the supposition is not in accordance with the manners of a simple and rude people like the Britons. They were probably only different names for the war-chariots already noticed.

seized by the enemy. But he suppressed his paternal feelings as much as possible, from a sense of duty to his noble leader.

The messengers returned a little before day-break, with the important intelligence, that Mandubrace had collected all his warriors together, and intended immediately to attack Ver, should he not meet Cassibelan on the way, of which event he had some suspicion. The escape of the Roman from Trinow, and the probability that he might have overheard their conversation, while feigning to be so grievously injured, led Mandubrace to abandon his original plan, and greatly to suspect that the Catte would be plotting some scheme of revenge. Although hoping to be first in the field, and to fall upon Cassibelan unawares, he was not without his suspicion, that that wary chief might be already on the war-path; and if so, it seemed to him probable, that he might come in conflict with him on his way to Ver.

The Catte king became anxious to surprise the Trinobante town, where the store of corn was secretly kept, of which Octavius had informed him; and as soon as day-light gleamed, all were astir in the camp. A party headed by Cassibelan set out for the town, while Condidan remained behind in charge of the camp, until the return of

his leader. This party soon tracked their way to the quiet town, over which the light of a disastrous day was faintly dawning. The drowsy inhabitants were quickly roused, and beholding their homes suddenly filled with Catte warriors, were confused and terrified. The Trinobante warriors, who were resident in this place, were afar off at Trinow, whither they had gone to join Mandubrace. There were a few men, who, however, notwithstanding their age, being aided by the women, had the courage to make a bold resistance. But they were easily overpowered, and some were left bleeding on the earth, while the rest escaped to the forest. The Catte made a few youths prisoners, from some of whom, by threats of severe torture, they extorted the discovery of the place where the store of corn was lodged; and having taken possession of these stores, and plundered every home of whatever they cared to take, they drove away all the cattle from the sheds, and sheep from the folds, and returned to the encampment.

This booty was immediately forwarded to Ver by a portion of the slaves, who usually accompanied the warriors in their expeditions, and was placed in the temple, and entrusted to the care of the Druids. Within the hallowed precincts of the stone circle, and even in its immediate neighbour-

hood, whatever was there deposited, might be left unguarded in perfect security. No one dared to touch that which was committed to the care of the sacred order. So strong indeed was the feeling and habit of honesty in these primitive times, that an offence was rarely committed by one member of a tribe against the property of another, though the same men would unscrupulously engage in plundering expeditions to the lands and towns of other tribes, even when not at war with them.

The warriors, in high spirits at the successful commencement of their campaign, broke up the encampment, and proceeded on their way to Trinow. The greater part of the Cattle were on foot; and in the progress of their enterprise, they underwent much fatigue; but neither was their ardour cooled, nor were their exertions at all diminished. The country presented many difficulties, which can now be but feebly conceived, especially in the low and swampy districts, where the wheels of the war-chariots frequently sunk to the axle, and could only be extricated by the united efforts of man and beast. The chiefs, as well as their followers, cheerfully bore a part in these toils, with an energy that would have graced a good cause, and rendered them benefactors to their race, instead of its destroyers.

Towards the close of the short wintry day, when they had advanced within two or three miles of Trinow, the Catte beheld from the higher land, from which they were descending, the forces of Mandubrace, drawn up in the open country, in the direct course which lay between himself and that town. The first idea of some of the Catte chiefs was to halt and conceal themselves in the adjoining forest, and from thence to steal on the enemy in the darkness of the night, and surround them, and cut off their retreat to their capital. But though this stratagem was consistent with British warfare, it could not be adopted; for the king and his elder chiefs had no doubt that the Trinobantes expected their approach. Before Cassibelan's war-party had advanced a quarter of a mile nearer, this opinion was confirmed by the enemy being seen in motion; and the Trinobante army soon presented the firm front of men, who were ready to contest the ground on which they stood.

With bitter thoughts of the long catalogue of injuries which each tribe deemed it had sustained from each, the opposing forces were about to rush forward into fierce conflict; and without any of the usual preliminaries of a formal battle, would soon have been engaged in murderous combat, had not the Druids, from both parties, thrown them-

selves between the drawn bows and poised spears of the combatants, and commanded them to desist from hostilities until the following day. The tide of wrath, which was rushing on like an impetuous mountain torrent, was immediately checked ; and though the excited spirits of the warriors were not hushed into quietude, yet they fell back, obedient to a mandate which they dared not resist or dispute. The sun of a winter's day was setting in clear and calm beauty, as these angry men were drawing together, to prepare their resting-place for the next few hours.

The two tribes formed their encampment at a short distance from each other ; and when the evening hours had been spent around the camp-fires, silence succeeded the busy hum of human voices, and the minds of men, lately meditating ruin and death, were lulled into forgetfulness and peace by the "fairy touch of sleep."

Although the Druids were exempt from military service, yet a few always accompanied an armed expedition ; sometimes to stimulate the warriors to deeds of bravery, by drawing vivid pictures of the happy and immortal life inherited by the valiant who fell in battle ; and frequently to check and moderate the fierce passions of the conquerors after victory. In each camp the Druids formed a small

group apart from the warriors, with whom they only mingled at times, when they deemed their services were needed.

Cassibelan and Mandubrace also kept aloof from their chiefs; for leaders of armies in ancient times frequently used the silent hours of the night, preceding the day of battle, for planning the arrangements of their forces and manner of attack. On this occasion, the wakeful king was not the only one whose thoughts were intensely engaged in the momentous affairs of the morrow.

The Roman captive had indeed lain down like the rest for repose; but he could not sleep with the apparent indifference of the Catte warriors. The conflict, which would take place on the ensuing day, was not contemplated by him with the same feelings as former conflicts had been, when he was a Roman soldier. Then, when about to face the enemy, glory or death was the usual anticipation. Now a very fearful fate for him hung on the struggle of the two tribes. Should the Catte be unsuccessful, he might be thrown into the power of the vindictive Trinobante chief, from whom not only no mercy could be expected, but the most cruel and protracted tortures that could be devised would, in all probability, be inflicted upon him. On the other hand, should the Catte be

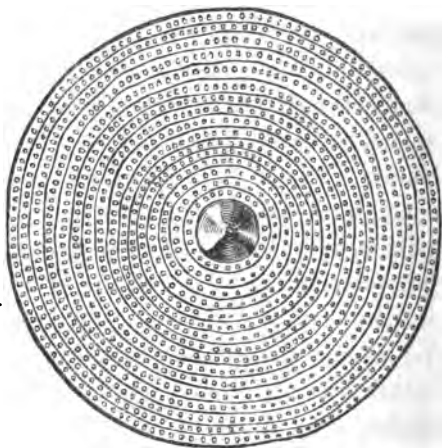
successful, the harassing and desponding thought, would, ever and anon in these silent hours, intrude on his attention, that he might yet be given up to the Druids as a suitable victim either to appease or gratify some British deity. •

These sad reflections served to deepen the gloom which was around him, and kept him wakeful, restless, and wretched during the silent watches of this long and weary night. But as the last dark hour was passing away into the light and busy scenes of the opening day, so passed away the sad thoughts and painful feelings of Octavius, and he was as ready as any Catte warrior to go forth to the battle-field, there to fall or conquer.

The camps were speedily broken up, and the respective chiefs of the two tribes marshalled their followers, and proceeded to the ground selected by their leaders. The armies, according to British custom, were arranged in the form of a wedge. The retainers, who were on foot, composed the bulk of the forces, and occupied the centre. They were not, however, distinguished by a uniformity of arms; for some had only a battle-axe, made of flint or other hard stone inserted into a wooden handle, and a long knife in the girdle; while others carried a spear formed of metal, but more commonly of bone ground to a point, and fast-

ened by wooden pegs into an oaken or other shaft.

Some had a large broad pointless sword, made of copper or brass, and which depended at the right side by a belt that passed over the left shoulder; and many were armed with bows and arrows, and dirks formed either of metal or bone, which were also worn in the girdle. Most of them carried a flat circular shield, usually made of wicker, and covered with skin, which was held at arm's length, in action, while the right hand grasped the offensive weapon.



The Britons wore few clothes in battle, the

upper part of the body being uncovered. The warriors of each clan formed a rank or file, at the extremity of which, chiefs were stationed; and the war-chariots and wagons were placed in the rear. The number of war-chariots which the Britons used in battle is uncertain. Cassibelan is said to have had the extraordinary number of four thousand in his army, when resisting the progress of the Romans; but these were probably collected from various tribes, as he was the commander of all the British forces.

The arms of the chieftains differed from those of the retainers only in being more generally composed of metal; and even their shields were frequently covered with a metallic coating, and were ornamented with concentric circles, whose intervening spaces were set with small knobs. The shield was about two feet in diameter, and had a hollow boss in the centre for the hand.

When the men had taken their stations, Cassibelan rode along the ranks, and harangued them, in the simple but fervent language of the times.

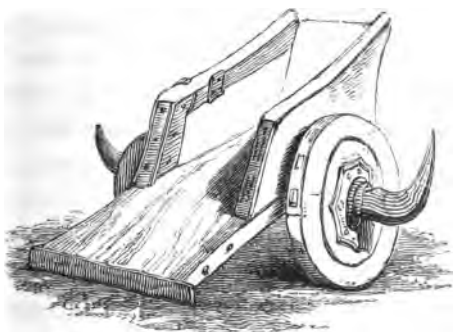
"Sons of battle," he began, "fame and disgrace are both before you. To-day the brave will add to their renown. They will rush into the arms of death, rather than suffer defeat. Forward, then, to action. Remember that none but heroes

are greeted with a welcome to their homes, or honoured at the joyous feast. Warriors, advance to a glorious death or to a proud conquest. The deeds of this day will live in song. Let the recital be sweet to the heroes of future times, who shall sing, 'Great and brave were the Catte warriors. Their arrows flew with the lightning's speed. The enemy lay on the red earth as thick as autumn-leaves on the forest-path!' Chiefs, lead your clans to victory!"

Loud acclamations followed this short address, which were echoed by the Trinobantes, who had just received a similar exhortation from Mandubrace. The war-shout was raised on both sides, and the colours hoisted. The chieftains struck their shields, and the long shrill blast of the horns sounded from all points, while the bards sung the song of glory; and amid these commingled sounds, the opposing armies advanced at a quick running pace, each chariot-horse having at its head a swift-footed attendant.

The moment the parties came into collision, the foremost lines were broken, and the little order in which a British army advanced to the conflict quickly disappeared. The mounted warriors were fiercely attacked by those on foot, who carried a spear each, at the butt-end of which was a bronze

bell, filled with pieces of metal, which, when shaken, made a noise that often frightened the horses. These weapons were thrown at the horsemen, and recovered by a long leather thong, to which they were made fast; and when the riders perceived they were marked objects of attack, they frequently dismounted and fought on foot, during which the horses, it is said, were so well trained, that they would remain on the spots where they were left until their masters returned.



The war-chariots soon rushed into the ranks, carrying confusion wherever they were driven. These ponderous and formidable machines would have put an end to all order, even in a disciplined army; and the misery and death which they spread along the tracks in which they were driven, no

skill could ward off. The charioteers urged the swift and impetuous steeds forward with incredible speed, which made even Cæsar's army look upon them with dread; and Octavius, though now familiar with them, could not behold them to-day without a feeling of horror.

Cassibelan, who was distinguished by a long white feather in his cap, was in an *essedæ*, a car which carried three persons, one of whom managed the horses, while the other two fought from its sides. Octavius, although unused to this mode of warfare, was to-day the companion of the king, by his request, and by whom he was encouraged to speak freely on the British system of attack and defence. Cassibelan, the first general in Britain, shewed himself a truly great man in nothing more than in his readiness to learn from a Roman soldier, and in his respect for the superior knowledge of his captive.

A few young chiefs, who had distinguished themselves in former conflicts, were severally entrusted with a *covinus*. This was a war-chariot which carried one person, and was armed with hooks, that tore in pieces all who came in its way. Segonax and Rheuda were two of the young men thus honourably distinguished; and as they drove past Cassibelan, they waved their hands to him,

and cried out exultingly, "We go to victory or death!"

"Brave youths," exclaimed Cassibelan, as he looked after them, with an anxiety which bespoke his fatherly regard for them; "may ye live to see many more suns arise, and the stones of your elders set up!"

As the eye of the Catte leader wandered over the battle-field, where the fury of a fierce conflict began to rage, a deep sense of duty and honour arose within him, and the enthusiasm of the warrior urged him to daring action. Never had two British tribes contended more furiously against each other, than the Catte and Trinobante contended this day. Foe met foe with an indignant spirit, with a bitter sense of injuries, real and imaginary, and with a firm resolve to avenge all wrongs.

The fierce attack was repelled with manful resistance, and the wily stratagem was detected and evaded with adroitness. But human strength fails after a long and violent struggle. Line after line was broken on each side, until the two armies became one confused concourse of men, struggling for life and death. Impetuous passion swelled up tumultuously from every heart, and distorted every countenance. Imprecations were heard from every tongue, and violent gestures contorted every

form. Fierce shouts rent the air ; the cries of the vanquished, and the yells of the victors, the shrieks of the wounded, and the groans of the dying, mingled in one deafening and frightful uproar. The green earth was slippery with blood, which had flowed from the struggling combatants, the wounded and the dead ; and the bright sun, moving in the clear blue sky, that day threw his glorious rays over a scene of reckless strife, yelling misery, and fiendish slaughter.

Leaders could no longer keep aloof from the warfare around, but frequently led their men into the thickest of the battle's turmoil. Cassibelan's esseda was driven impetuously among the combatants, and his voice was heard far and wide over the field of strife, hailing and urging on his warriors ; and its tones soon brought an implacable foe before him. The car of Mandubrace confronted that of the leader of the Catte. The Trinobante, burning to avenge his father's death and his own past defeat, poured forth opprobrious epithets on Cassibelan, and springing on the ground, dared him to single combat.

The challenge was proudly accepted ; and in the next instant, the fiery courage of the younger warrior was conflicting with the cooler and more experienced tact of the elder Briton. Octavius

sprung after the king, and challenged the companion of Mandubrace to conflict; and his superior discipline and skill soon proved more than a match for the fierce assaults of his adversary, and the rude warrior fell a victim at his feet.

He then turned with intense interest to the contest between the two commanders. Anxiety for the safety and honour of his noble protector led him to watch with a vigilance, that made him forgetful of his own danger. Though the kingly combatants, and their attendants, stood apart from the fight, yet foes mingled with friends around them, and with peril on every side, the utmost wariness as well as courage was necessary to individual safety.

The Roman's keen eye espied, immediately behind Cassibelan, a warrior, whose crafty manner bespoke the Trinobante foe, and not the Catte friend. This man had mingled among the combatants, and at the moment when about to thrust his long knife into the back of the Catte leader, Octavius arrested his arm, and laid him prostrate and wounded on the earth. A shout arose from the Catte warriors who witnessed the dexterity of this act, followed by a low murmur, that the Roman had saved the king's life.

Cassibelan was unconscious of this passing

scene, and not until Mandubrace fell back with a groan into the arms of his warriors, some of whom had now collected about him, and the Catte king had vaulted into his car with his bloody weapon in his hand, was he aware of the imminent danger from which he had been preserved by the fidelity and skill of his Roman captive. Exhausted by the severe conflict which he had sustained with his fallen foe, and by the tumultuous emotions of his heart, he could not speak; but he seized the hand of the Roman with a fervour that strongly indicated his deep gratitude to Octavius for the generous act, and with this interchange of friendly feeling, they again mingled in the turmoil and uproar of the battle-scene.

The Catte raised a shout of triumph, announcing that Mandubrace was slain. These fatal words struck consternation and terror into the hearts of the Trinobantes; and those who heard them turned and fled from the contest. In vain did the chiefs attempt to arrest the flying rumour; in vain did they support Mandubrace in his car, wave his cap in the air, and call on his warriors to rally round their leader.

The report was borne, as if with the speed of the winds, over the wide field of strife. The confusion was irreparable, the mistake soon too ex-

tensively spread, and the army too much scattered, to be again gathered together ; and it was with great difficulty that Mandubrace and his companions escaped being taken prisoners. It was fortunate for them that the impetuosity of the Catte hurried them into an indiscriminate pursuit of the flying enemy, instead of securing the main prize. Cassibelan and Condidan saw this when too late to recall their warriors. A numerous band of Trinobantes, anxious for the safety of their wounded leader, formed a firm line around the car in which he was borne, and secured his escape, though not without the forfeiture of some of their own lives.

When the struggle was over, the chiefs about Cassibelan urged him to an immediate advance on Trinow, as the capture of this important place would complete the utter defeat and ruin of their enemies. But the king hesitated between their pressing requests and his own fears of the practicability of the scheme ; for the wide dispersion of his warriors impeded that promptness on which the success of the enterprise depended.

Cassibelan knew that a little delay would allow the Trinobantes to reach the entrenchments, by which their capital was fenced round, before he could attack it ; and at this moment,

too, Casbar interfered and firmly opposed their project.

“ Brave warriors,” said Casbar, “ the gods have rewarded your valour and skill with victory. Let it be to you a sure pledge of their future favour. Let no rash or cruel deeds bring you again under their displeasure, lest heavier woes fall upon you, than those you thirst to bring upon your enemies. Have you forgotten the awful offence which stirred up the wrath of the Trinobantes, and kindled the anger of the Just Ones against you ? That anger has been stayed and turned away from you. So, now, must your wrath be stayed, and in the hour of your triumph you must shew mercy. Shed no more blood. Let there be an end of strife. Behold, the heralds of peace approach us. Be mindful of their sacred office, and hearken to their demands.”

The warriors, checked in their desires, waited in silence the approach of the Trinobante bards, who presently stood before the car of Cassibelan. The most aged of the group addressed him in persuasive accents, mingled with that tone of command which the whole order always assumed, even when addressing the greatest chieftain.

“ Victor of many battles ! king of spears !”

said the bard, "the brave Mandubrace is wounded and disabled. He yields to you the honour of this day's conflict. O son of a hero, let pity move your noble heart in the midst of victory! Call back your warriors, and stay the cruel work of death. Let the wounded and the dying have that help and care which their miseries call for. Leader of brave men, the sun will shortly withdraw his beams of light, that man and beast may have repose. Do not rashly turn aside the order of nature, but gather together the scattered people. So shall peace dwell in the land, when Ceridwen looks mildly upon the sons of men from her bright orb. Noble conqueror, hearken to our words, and be wise and generous, as thou art brave and victorious."

The tumultuous passions of the chiefs subsided during the Druid's address to their leader; and they gazed with a reverence, mingled with feelings almost of love, on the venerable speaker, whose thinly scattered hair many suns had bleached, and whose snowy beard the evening breeze gently moved. The sanctity of the order to which the speaker belonged greatly increased the reverence which the Britons felt towards the aged herald, and made the appeal irresistible. Cassibelan instantly perceived, by one glance at his

chiefs, their altered feelings towards the enemy, and therefore more readily replied :

“ Holy man, your counsel is wise and just. Your wishes are granted. Amidst conquest I have never been unmindful of mercy. Chiefs, hasten to bring back your warriors. Let the wounded have relief, and the dying rest. Sufficient for this day is the glory we have won. Let our enemies witness that brave hearts can be moved to pity.”

Though the warriors promptly obeyed their leader's command, it was no easy task to stay the course of undisciplined men in pursuit of plunder. A long time elapsed before all the stragglers could be recalled. One party after another slowly returned, bringing in their train prisoners, war-chariots, wagons, horses, and cattle. In the mean time the camp was re-formed, and the Druids, with the help of the warriors, brought within it the wounded, many of whom were captives. To their necessities the Druids of the unfortunate Trinobante tribe promptly administered; and then departed to inform Mandubrace of the result of their mission, and to relate a sad tale of many of his brave warriors who had fallen on the field of strife, or had been taken prisoners.

The camp presented a very different appear-

ance to that of the previous evening. All were then full of anticipation and hope. Now, while sounds of mirth and exultation came from the lips of many warriors, there were others, on whose countenances sat anxiety and sorrow. Some watched by the side of a beloved father, son, or brother, who lay wounded and helpless; while others sat alone in a deeper anguish, mourning for the dead, whose disfigured corpses had been brought in from the battle-field. And such has ever been the strange intermixture of sorrow and triumph, that has followed the bloody strifes of war. How small the good, and how great the evil which have always sprung from victory and conquest! To this sad truth, the records of history, and the mournful tales of thousands of grief-stricken hearts, bear but too ample testimony.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALTHOUGH the dead had been collected together on the previous evening, and removed into the camp to be protected from the ravenous wolf ; yet, on the following day, the battle-ground still presented a frightful spectacle. Traces of human violence were every where to be seen ; broken and lost weapons of destruction, the blood-stained course of the war-chariots, and mangled limbs of man and beast, told a sad tale of deadly conflict which had there been waged. It would, however, be unjust to condemn hastily the barbarities of the Briton, and to censure him for regarding the battle-field as the spot on which alone the glory that should live to future ages could be won. The aims and hopes of the Briton were like those of all men of rude and dark ages. They bore the stamp of his condition. And as only a very faint glimmering of the light had been awakened in his mind, which now sheds its radiance over the civilised nations of our own times, the injustice and severity of this condemnation will be still more apparent on calling to mind the fact, that nations

enlightened by the accumulated knowledge of revelation and science for twenty centuries still perpetuate the horrors of war, and by national festivities celebrate the deadly strifes in which thousands of their fellow-men have been slaughtered, and far more munificently reward the heroes of a hundred battles, than the most successful and protracted labours of wisdom and philanthropy. There is, however, a court elsewhere in which this judgment will be reversed. Let virtue, both among the great and lowly, be patient and faithful. As surely as the setting sun gilds the clouds of evening with its golden radiance, so surely shall all good deeds receive the approval and blessing of Him, who seeth in secret, and will one day reward openly.

The Catte chiefs assembled on a knoll, at a short distance from the camp, to consult with each other about their next movements. They still thirsted for a continuance of the war; but Casbar firmly opposed them. He and his brethren declared, that the omens of the last sacrifices, offered at the gathering of the mistletoe, had received their fulfilment. The Catte were also again reminded of the peculiar circumstance which had led to the war, and which demanded from them generosity and humanity towards their aggrieved foes. The chiefs, with apparent willingness, submitted to the

wisdom of this counsel, though secretly they were deeply mortified at being checked in their successful career.

After some further conference, Cassibelan and his warriors, with the approbation of the Druids, fixed the terms on which Mandubrace should ransom his captive people ; and while they waited for the expected messengers from Trinow, Cassibelan addressed them on another subject.

“ Companions in victory,” said he, as he motioned to Octavius, who stood at a slight distance, to approach the group ; “ behold my preserver ! The watchfulness and skill of the Roman turned the fortune of yesterday in our favour, as some of you know. Had I fallen by the hand of the treacherous chief, fortune might have smiled on our enemies. Defeat might have driven you to seek refuge in the fastnesses of the forest. And perhaps your homes, ere now, would have been laid waste, and your kindred dragged away into captivity. Let this good service blot out the memory of that evil, which he, as a Roman, once sought to inflict on our homes and liberties. He perilled his life on our behalf in Trinow. But for his adroitness in the house of Mandubrace, our enemies might have fallen upon us unexpectedly and unprepared. And yesterday he struck down

the insidious foe, who sought secretly to plunge his weapon into my body, while combatting with my adversary. Let the Roman henceforth be a friend amongst us."

Cassibelan, though addressing his warriors, intended principally to plead the cause of the captive Roman to the Druids. The chiefs testified their approval with hearty applause, while the Druids remained silent. Condidan not only commended, but gave to Octavius the greatest proof of personal regard a British warrior could bestow. He presented his arms to his captive guest, and received from him in return the sword with which he had saved the life of Cassibelan. This simple ceremony of exchanging arms was esteemed a solemn covenant of peace and friendship amongst the Britons; and the compact was usually cherished by the parties to the end of life, and often descended to their children. The words of Cassibelan, and the friendly act of Condidan, awakened glad feelings in the heart of Octavius, and encouraged him to speak more freely than he had hitherto done in the presence of the Druids.

"Generous Catte," said Octavius, "a sense of duty, honour, and gratitude prompted the deed that has won for me your approval and friendship. The conviction that I owe my own life to the noble

Cassibelan has made his sacred to me. Your united hospitality and mercy have filled my heart with gratitude; and I thank the gods that they have permitted me to preserve the noblest of British warriors from an unworthy fate. Your forbearance and friendly treatment have awakened an interest in my breast for the welfare of yourselves, your homes, your honour, your liberties, and the altar of your gods; and from this hour I shall gladly spend my life in your service."

As Octavius concluded, the Trinobante bards were seen approaching; and as a mark of respect for their years and order, the Catte chiefs advanced to meet them.

"Noble Catte," said the elder of the sacred band, addressing Cassibelan, "we come from Mandubrace, the son of misfortune, to know your terms for the release of the prisoners, and for the establishment of peace. Great warrior, we look for generous treatment, since you cannot be unmindful of the sad event which has led to this unhappy strife. Be just and merciful to a stricken people, and the great Hu will bless and prosper you."

The Catte warriors were not pleased that their enemies should deem themselves the injured party. They would fain have had Cassibelan advert to the treachery of the Trinobantes in bringing the

Romans to Ver. The king, however, wisely refrained from saying any thing that was likely to prolong a spirit of bitterness between the two tribes. He respectfully stated to the Druids the number of sheep and cattle which must be given as a ransom for the prisoners; and on their consenting to these terms, Cassibelan declared that peace and friendship should henceforward be observed between himself and Mandubrace. The Trinobante bards murmured at the conditions, declaring that their people were already greatly impoverished; but as the Catte Druids were silent, and as Cassibelan stood firm to his proposals, the bards of the vanquished party reluctantly promised compliance on the behalf of their tribe. Before they departed, they urged Cassibelan to promise, that when Mandubrace should be sufficiently recovered from his wounds, the two leaders and principal chiefs of the two tribes should meet at an appointed place and feast together, as a means of establishing mutual amity on a firmer basis.

The Trinobante bards urged this matter the more warmly, knowing that their own people were the weaker of the two, and usually the greatest sufferers in their mutual conflicts. But Cassibelan and his warriors being aware of this fact, resolved not to enter into any solemn compact with their

Trinobante neighbours, and therefore promptly declined the festal meeting. In the midst of the revelry of a feast, they feared lest they might be drawn into some pledge of future good-will and peace, either by the exchange of arms, or by the more sacred ceremony of the two kings drinking a few drops of each other's blood, which was deemed by the Britons to be the most solemn bond of peace and friendship. The Catte Druids did not come to the aid of their Trinobante brethren, conceiving they had exacted sufficient concession at this time from the victors, by inducing them to abstain from further hostilities. Disappointed and dejected, the messengers returned to Trinow, where the account of their mission created distrust and forebodings of more suffering to come.

The Catte now proceeded to the interment of the dead. A shallow excavation was first made in the earth, and therein the bodies were heaped together with weapons of war. Over the whole a conical mound was raised, by the united labour of the Catte warriors, while the bards sung the funeral song. And from this hour an air of sacredness surrounded the newly-formed barrow, which should tell the sad tale to future ages, that here lie the mouldering remains of men, who, near this spot, fell in deadly strife.

The Catte, like all primitive people, vainly imagined that the memorials which they constructed would perpetuate their valorous deeds to all future times. But the assumed deathless fame of the ancient warrior has faded away, and most of his imagined imperishable monuments have disappeared. Over those which still remain, and beneath which have rested so many centuries the ashes of the long-forgotten dead, and which so forcibly symbolised the customs and modes of life and feeling of a race of by-gone ages, men continue to stroll, as thousands have done in past times, elated with their own joys or depressed by their own sorrows, and engrossed by interests as fugitive as those of the departed, scarcely giving to their memories a passing thought—save the reflecting few, who love to wander in imagination along the historic tracks of olden time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON their way back to Ver, the extent of the Catte train had been considerably increased by the many prisoners, war-chariots, horses, and other spoils; so that their own losses were not immediately apparent. And from this unpleasant subject their thoughts were diverted on coming within sight of the town, which they did about the middle of the second day; for, as soon as the first blast of the horns was heard in Ver, men, women, and children rushed from their dwellings, and lined the barriers of the town, and hailed the approach of the army with rapturous shouts, which, mingling with the heroic songs of the bards, excited a general feeling of enthusiastic joy.

On a nearer approach, the heart of many a wife, mother, and sister throbbed with thrilling apprehension, as the eye eagerly wandered in search of the loved ones among the motley multitude, some of whom were sought in vain, having fallen in the war-strife. Their mangled bodies now rested beneath the newly-formed mound, and over which the wild flowers would soon wave in the summer

breeze, in beauty and brightness, while all beneath was hastening to decay.

Octavius had cause to rejoice that the homes of his host, and that of the king, presented scenes of mutual congratulation and pleasure, and not of condolence and sorrow. The hearty welcome, which he had received on his return from all, was grateful to his own heart. Malvina had met him with a kindliness like that with which she received her son; while he was inclined to imagine that Mingala had shewn towards him a more tender feeling of rejoicing, on his reappearance in Ver, than she did even towards her brother Segonax.

The warm-hearted congratulations with which Comhal, the wife of Cassibelan, also received him, filled his heart with satisfaction and joy. She treated him with a consideration and respect which she had never before shewn him. The friendship of the king and Condidan, and the unseen but effective influence which these kind-hearted women might exercise over his future fortunes, seemed to offer him a more secure and happy position than he had occupied since his captivity. They were to him blessed promises that the awful fate he had so much and so long dreaded, would now be perhaps averted from him. Mirth and joy were heard in all parts of Ver this evening; and both

to those who listened, and to those who recounted the events of the war, time fled with speed. There were some indeed whose hearts the arrow of sorrow had pierced, to whom it moved on with a tardy step. The assurance that the husband, son, or brother had met a glorious death, utterly failed to hush the soul to peace in the first hours of its wretchedness. The death of beloved ones throws an appalling darkness over the spirit of the bereaved, which nothing but a light from heaven can disperse; and this light did not gladden the home and heart of the rude Briton.

The next day a division of the spoils was made by Cassibelan, assisted by the Druids. Octavius received a horse, five head of cattle, half a score of sheep, and some arms; and though this allotment in some degree gratified and encouraged him, yet he was far from being satisfied with his reward. He had fondly hoped that his liberty would be the recompense of his bravery. Hence his prospects were again clouded, and the cup of anticipated joy was dashed from his lips just as he expected to quaff its precious draught. Suppressing his feelings, however, he accepted the gift with apparent satisfaction; and well knowing through whose influence the blessed boon of freedom was withheld, he resolved so to use his first possessions in Britain

as to conciliate Casbar and the Druids, and to win, if possible, their future favour.

Each recipient was expected to reserve a portion of his allotment for an offering; and at the close of the division of the spoils, all the warriors directed their steps to the temple, to present their respective tributes to the gods for having given them the victory over their foes. Octavius, with the same intent, joined the train; but, as a captive, he knew the inferior station he occupied; and having first allowed all the freemen to make their offerings, he then led his horse to the verge of the temple, and presented it, with his other gifts, which Cormo and Taxmillan had brought thither for him, to the Druids, reserving only for himself the arms, which to them were useless. It was the practice of the warriors of all nations to present at the altar a part of the fruits of victory; but policy led Octavius to bring the whole of his to the temple.

The presentation of offerings being ended, the warriors returned to their homes, and spent the remainder of the day in their usual festive enjoyments, in which Octavius joined with more freedom and satisfaction than he had hitherto ever done.

In a short time the Trinobantes completed the

treaty, and redeemed all their people. The signs of scarcity suddenly vanished from Ver; for the spoils of conquest and the ransom of the prisoners spread plenty throughout the town. The warriors entered into the sports of the chase with fresh vigour, and thus increased their resources; and the industrious mechanic once more plied his art with the hope of recompense.

But although the war had relieved the necessities of the conquerors, it had involved the vanquished in much suffering. Had the same energies, lately wasted on the battle-field, been employed in cultivating the soil, improving the pasturage; and carefully tending their flocks and herds, each tribe would have had a more ample supply of their daily wants; and a few years' industry and peace would have scattered blessings in abundance over a land repeatedly desolated by hurricanes of wild and fierce passions, which change men into fiends.

The spring passed away without any further intimation having been given to Octavius that the service he had rendered the king would be further rewarded. He still remained a captive, though the treatment he received was that of the free, as he had for some time taken part in the hunting excursions, and had become more than ever the companion of Cassibelan and his chiefs. The Catte

now regarded him as one of themselves, and he was no longer treated with the least reserve on account of his foreign extraction. Yet the angel of content refused to dwell with him. There was a worm still feeding on the vitals of his happiness. The dense clouds, which foretell the approach of a storm, ever and anon lifted their ominous heads above the horizon of his peace, and now and then the muttering thunder was heard in the distance. Octavius could maintain no stability of feeling, but was tossed to and fro by alternations of hope and fear. For no sign of approval had yet been shewn him, either by Casbar or any of the Druids. How could he feel himself secure or happy under the treatment of these mysterious men, in whose hands was lodged the destiny of every man in the Catte community? It was not surprising that sometimes he murmured in secret against Cassibelan, who apparently made no further effort to obtain for him freedom and permanent safety. But by cherishing these thoughts he wronged the generous-hearted Briton, who, however strongly he might desire it, had not the power to liberate a captive, whom the Druids had once claimed as an offering to the gods, without their sanction.

Cassibelan had indeed striven in private to win

their consent to spare the Roman's life, but they were slow in yielding to his desires. Even when the Druids judged it politic to give way to the force of public opinion, they were cautious in doing so openly, and usually had recourse to magical arts and divination, by which they concealed their own concessions, and made the people believe that a change in their conduct was the effect of divine impulse and guidance. In this way they avoided all suspicion of being influenced in their decisions by the people's wishes. Every alteration in opinion or conduct made by the Druids, every claim foregone, every judgment revoked, was by them invariably ascribed to an interference of the gods; and on this ground the ancient priest, as well as the priest of modern times, plausibly claimed, and too often obtained, the credit of infallibility, or, which is the same thing, divine direction.

Octavius witnessed a series of mystic ceremonies of the Druids, without being aware that his own weal or woe would ultimately be decided by them. The last of these was performed in the hall of Cassibelan, in which the Druids assembled, bringing with them the branch of a fruit-bearing tree, which they cut into short sticks or tallies; and having distinguished each by a different mark, they were held up by one of the sacred order, and

then permitted to fall from the hand into a white mantle. At the conclusion of this portion of the mystic rite, Casbar proceeded to offer an address to the gods; and taking each stick and raising it above his head three times, he drew a silent omen from the respective marks. As he laid down the last, he announced to Cassibelan that the auguries were favourable. Had it been agreeable to his present policy, he would have pronounced them the contrary, and in that case further proceedings would have been prohibited.

The spectators next followed the Druids into the open air, where a long series of divinations were begun on the flight and windings, the merry or plaintive notes of the birds, and the various habits pertaining to them, all of which were carefully noted by the priests; and at the close, the omens were communicated to Cassibelan in private. As soon as these magical ceremonies had ended, the attention of the people was directed to the peculiar observances that appertained to the evening of this day. It was the eve of May, an eve memorable in this island as the commencement of a great festival among the Britons.

The object of this festival was to celebrate the coming forth of the Noachid family from the Ark, and was observed with great feasting and merriment,

intermingled with religious ceremonies. The first rite, relics of which continue to the present day in some remote districts, was the lighting up of two great fires—the one on a cairn, the other on the adjoining ground, with an intervening space through which the Druids drove with ashen boughs the victims intended for the next day's sacrifice. By this ceremony they were supposed to acquire a degree of purification which gave them a greater fitness for the sacred purpose to which they were devoted. Men as well as beasts were sometimes hurried through this fiery passage, as if to give a keener and deeper sense of the horrid doom which awaited them on the morrow: a doom from which there was no escape when the mandate of the Druids had gone forth.

Cormo had, at one time, looked forward to the return of this season of the year with a trembling anxiety, lest his new friend should be in the number of the victims destined for the altar of the British Moloch. But happily on this occasion no heart was doomed to suffer the pain of anticipated torture, no weeping and wailing and dying shrieks would be heard on the morrow: the Druidical altar was not to be stained with human blood. The coming day would be a Sabbath of rest from cruelty and blood-guiltiness, anguish and death.

After the observance of this singular custom, the Druids withdrew from the people, and retired into a sequestered part of the forest, where amidst its deepest shades they celebrated their mystic rites, some of which none were allowed to witness but members of the sacred order, although a few of the people, distinguished for their rank and age, were privileged to behold the closing ceremonies which were solemnised at the temple. Meanwhile all the Britons were abroad gazing on the numerous fires which had been lighted up by the Druids on every cairn, barrow, and natural eminence, and which flung around their red flickering flames on the face of the dark heavens, and gave a wild beauty to the spots they illumined. The lurid light of these Beltein* fires, which studded the whole face of the country, formed a splendid and imposing spectacle, and created in the minds of the superstitious Britons a thrilling awe for that mysterious divinity, in whose honour they were kindled up.

Bel, the god of the May festivities, was believed to inhabit the sun, and was regarded and adored by the people as the dispenser of light and heat. Among the Druids, however, Bel was only another name for Hu, their great and favourite deity.

* Fires of Bel.

These fires of Bel were carefully tended by the Druidesses, and continued to burn long after the people had withdrawn to their dwellings for a few hours' repose. As soon, however, as the first gleams of morning twilight streaked the eastern horizon, they were suffered to expire. And now the people came forth again from their homes, and hastened to the hallowed glade, where stood the temple, and other sacred monuments of their religion. Here the Druids and Druidesses, the chief and retainer, the aged and the young, gathered together around the Logan-stone, on the summit of which a few of the most honoured of the sacred order took their station.

Every eye of this motley assembly was directed to the east, reverently watching the dim grey light, gradually softening and changing into a brighter tint, spreading farther and farther over the great vault of heaven, and finally mellowing into a warm golden lustre, when the glorious orb of day, the residence of the divine Bel, rose up, adorning the face of the earth with beauty and brightness, and filling the hearts of his worshippers with gladness. A spontaneous shout of joyous welcome burst from the lips of these simple children of nature, as the sun appeared above the horizon, and which echoed through the forest glade. As these sounds

died away, the melodious song of the bards commenced; and when the great fount of light and heat presented his full orb to view, the deiseal was performed by the whole assembly around the Logan-stone.

At the close of this ceremony, the people, as they passed by the Logan-stone, received purification from the hand of Dunthalgo and Casbar, each of the worshippers being sprinkled with holy water, from the rock basin on its summit. After all had thus received a lustration, they were dismissed with a benediction to their respective homes, to partake of the morning's repast. The Druids likewise, who had spent the entire night in the sacred duties of their office, withdrew to their forest habitations for a hasty refreshment and a short repose.

As soon as these diligent sages had thus slightly recruited their strength, they were again astir; and at their command the people were summoned from their gay homes, which, in obedience to custom, they had decked within and without with green branches of their most favourite trees and shrubs, and their thresholds they had strewn with wild flowers. The sacred victims were brought forth, bearing on their heads the usual decorations of the season, and were led by members of the sacred

order towards the temple, followed by the people, crowned with ivy-branches. All were anxious to learn whether the omens, which the priests were about to draw from the sacrifices that were soon to be offered to the divine Bel, would be favourable to their future prosperity as a tribe, to the close of the year.

On reaching the temple, the Faids commenced singing a hymn in praise of the solar deity, while members of the holy order perambulated the altar three times, and the people performed the deiseal around the sacred structure. At the close of these preliminary observances, Dunthalmo offered an address to Bel, imploring him to pour forth, from day to day, his light and warmth, over the face of the land; that the forest-trees might bud and put on their robes of summer foliage; that the grass and corn might spring up to kindle hope in the hearts of the people; that the flowers might array themselves in their accustomed beauty; and that the fruit might ripen, and harvest reward the toils of the labourer, and fill every home with plenty and every heart with happiness. Casbar followed the aged Druid, briefly rehearsing to the people the popular traditions of the deluge; a custom always observed at the May, as well as at the November festivities. By this invariable practice

in almost all nations, there has been handed down, from age to age, the memory of the world's greatest catastrophe.

The altar having been sprinkled with oak-leaves, the victims were offered to Bel, while the Druids carefully examined the parts from which the omens were drawn. It pleased them, on this occasion, to announce that the auspices were favourable to the Catte, betokening prosperity and happiness to them as a tribe, provided that peace dwelt in the land. Casbar then exhorted the people in few but fervid words, and concluded his address with a Druidical Triad,* which he declared contained the first principles of wisdom :—

* Triads, poems consisting of verses of three lines, each containing a distinct idea ; the last being sometimes an inference from the two preceding. This mode of arranging thoughts in triplets is certainly Druidical, and most probably originated in the reverence of the Druids for the number three, which they undoubtedly regarded as the most sacred of all numbers. "The plan of this triplet," as Dr. Davis justly observes (*Davis's Rites and Mythology of the Druids*), "has that mixture of rude simplicity and accurate observation, which history ascribes to the Druids." The Welsh have no tradition of any metre so ancient as the Triad. This style of philosophising was certainly known before the time of any bard whose works are extant. Sir R. C. Hoare considers the Triad as the earliest of all British records. The metre has scarcely been used since the time of Llywarch Hen in the sixth century. (Sir R. C. Hoare's *Ancient Wiltshire*.)

To worship the gods;
To do no evil;
And to exercise fortitude.

When the closing rite of sprinkling blood on the people had been performed, they were dismissed with the command to go forth to the dance on the green. The may-pole having been set up, young and old, of both sexes, led by the Druidesses, performed the mystic dance of antiquity, which, in its figure, symbolised events connected with the most remote history of the human race, and known only to the Druids. The ancient Britons, like all barbarian races, cheerfully joined in the celebration of rites and customs, even though ignorant of their significance. We cannot marvel at this, as no attempt was ever made by their instructors to kindle in them a desire of knowledge; and they were taught to regard it as their duty to believe what the priest communicated to them, and not to be curious about what he withheld. What was then universal is still but too common. A large portion of mankind, even in our own times, take upon credit that which they might, and ought, individually to investigate for themselves, and thoroughly to comprehend.

The modern dance around the may-pole is an unmeaning custom, or simply a social and jovial

recreation. It was not so in ancient days; but was a religious rite of great significance, and was performed with much gravity, and in an invariable manner. The people joyfully received their dismissal from the performance of their rites of worship, and entered into their secular festivities with glad hearts, and with the noisy, jovial mirth of children, just broke loose from scholastic confinement.

The revels of May lasted nine days, a number which was sacred among the Druids; but for what reason is unknown, unless because it is a multiple of three, the most sacred of all numbers, and containing it three times. It was, however, the first of these days that became memorable to the Roman, and which no time could efface from his recollection. Beneath the favourite oak of the town of Ver, Cassibelan feasted his warriors on May eve, according to an immemorial custom, with his usual profuse generosity; and while the guests were gathering to the festive spot, Octavius received the first information of approaching good fortune.

“Roman,” whispered the bard of Condidan, “the reward of the brave has not yet equalled his merit. But as the blossom comes before the fruit, so hope goes before the looked-for enjoyment.

The days of doubt and sadness have passed away, and the season of peace and rejoicing is about to break forth. To receive the favour of the wise and brave is always welcome to the captive. To be so distinguished at the festival of the divine Bel is a most auspicious event, and betokens that prosperity and honour will continue to the end of life."

Although the meaning of this address was purposely veiled in some obscurity, yet Octavius could scarcely doubt that he was the individual to whom the bard alluded. He forbore, however, to question the venerable speaker, and resolved to wait quietly the approach of the happy event, which he could now anticipate was at hand. There was no time, indeed, for further discourse, as the feast had begun; and hilarity soon banished from every heart, save one, the cares of life. He who wears the bonds of captivity feels their galling pressure, even though he may think deliverance to be near at hand. Till they are struck off, he cannot rejoice like the free; while a doubt remains, anxiety will still feed on the peace of the heart. As pure and turbid waters meet and mingle and flow on in one continuous stream, so did hope and fear in the heart of the Roman, and chequered the current of feeling with perhaps much apprehension. Octa-

vius passed the wine-cup on, while his flushed cheek and wandering eye told of the intense conflict passing within him.

He had waited long for the tidings of his freedom, the boon which he anxiously hoped for, as the promised reward of his past bravery. "Was his sad case again forgotten?" he said to himself, "amidst the festal merriment." He pondered often and deeply that evening on the words of the bard. Had he mistaken their meaning? Casbar and the king had more than once earnestly engaged in conversation. Did the Druids still oppose the wishes of the Catte chief, which he now confidently believed to be in his favour? And thus had fear and dread again begun their work of torment in his inmost soul, when suddenly, while he was least expecting it, the noisy revel was hushed, and Casbar, rising up, stretched forth his hand as if to invite attention.

"Brave Catte," said he, "while many moons have come and passed away, a stranger has dwelt among us. He came hither a foe and a war-captive. From the hour he entered Ver, he could look only for the captive's fate. It was just that the vengeance of the Catte, whose homes his commander came to destroy, should overtake him; that his life should be offered up to the gods

whose altars he and his fellow-warriors came to overturn. Thus we decreed. From time to time we have sought to learn their will respecting him. The omens betokened delay, and his life has therefore been prolonged. Trials were appointed him, and he has passed through them with approval. He has been grateful to the tribe and faithful to the king. The oracles have again been consulted, and they are now auspicious to his future weal. As the winds of heaven often bear seed to distant spots, where they find shelter and nutriment, and spring up and blossom, so the gods have decreed that he, who was borne hither among a host of enemies, shall now take root and flourish in our lands. Roman, receive this spear,* and henceforth be free, and mingle with the warriors and hunters of the Catte tribe. It is the will of the gods that you should be numbered among the British chiefs. Shew yourself as brave, wise, and faithful as when you fought for Cæsar; so peace shall dwell in your British home, glory shall shine on your war-path, success shall crown your perils and toils in the forest-hunt. The green mound shall be raised over your lifeless body, and bear your memory to distant ages, when your last sun shall have gone

* The gift of a spear was the ancient mode of manumitting a slave.

down. Your spirit shall find rest in the far-off land—the home of sages and heroes.”

A tide of delight rushed in upon the heart of Octavius on hearing the announcement of his freedom. For a moment he was speechless. But the pause was brief. As he saw that the eager eyes of all were turned upon him, he struggled to bear his happiness, as he had borne his sorrows, in a manner befitting a truly brave man, and rose to reply to the gracious address of Casbar.

His words were few; for extreme joy, like extreme affliction, makes even the eloquent tongue silent. But when men have resolved to be pleased, a small matter produces agreeable excitement. The assembly were now in this mood, and greeted the short, fervid outpouring of the Roman's heart with much applause. As soon as this had subsided, Cassibelan rose, and waving his hand for silence, said: “ Brave Roman, and henceforth noble Briton of the tribe of the Catte, in the hour of our victory you became the preserver and friend of Cassibelan. The gods looked with approbation on the generous act, and have rewarded it by restoring you to liberty. From the state of a poor captive, it is my joy to raise you to that of a rich chief. In the presence of the wise and valiant, I give to you the piece of land which joins

to Condidan's, on the south side of the stream, and which stretches away to the great oak on the plain, and thence to the landmarks of Rheuda, the son of Brocmail. The cattle which graze upon it are yours also, and the flock which are penned at the dwelling of my bondsman Colmar. He and his family henceforth shall be your bond-folk, to tend your herds and flocks. May the great god Hu increase your possessions, and give you honour and length of days in the land of the Catte!"

The chiefs having testified their approval of the king's address, Octavius was about to reply, when Condidan, laying his hand on his arm, prevented him, saying, "Roman, to the precious gift of freedom and wealth let me add the joys of home. The smiles of beauty must brighten your dwelling, as the sun does the face of our land. Your valorous deeds have raised you to the rank of heroes, and won the smiles of the fair. Mingala, my child," taking the hand of his daughter and placing it in that of Octavius, "is the pride of my heart, and henceforth she shall be the light of your eyes, and the sunbeam on your hearth. To you she will be good and true. May the gods smile upon you and give you offspring. As the saplings grow up around the aged oak, so may your young

ones grow up and flourish, and be the joy and honour of your latter years."

Octavius, overpowered by his feelings, was attempting to reply to the king and his host, when Osric, leading on the other bards, relieved him from his embarrassment by striking their lyres and raising their voices in honour of the brave and in praise of the fair; and the whole assembly, stirred by the enthusiasm of the moment, uttered shouts of joy. The diversion was well-timed by the considerate old bard, and thankfully did the Roman shrink back into the joy and silence of his own heart. He was happy, and he looked upon a happy scene. All the inhabitants of the town were abroad, enjoying the genial warmth of a serene and sunny sky. They had left their smoky dwellings to bathe the senses in those delicious influences which are borne about, as if on angel-wings, by the gentle breezes of a sweet May evening. As all had feasted plentifully, all were disposed for joviality. The elder Britons reposed on the verdant turf beneath the young foliage of spring, and talked of the frolics of their youth, and the feats of their manhood. Freemen of the lowest grade, and even the slave, now felt that species of gladness, with which the sweet and haleful spring bathes the soul, and the festive meal, which did not often fall to

their lot, had made them merry. Parties of youth were scattered in every direction, adorned with flowers, the emblems of the young heart's graces. Beneath the garlands, which they had suspended from tree to tree, they merrily danced to the bardic music, the soft echoes of which came ever and anon from out the neighbouring forest, blended with the melodies of birds, like the responses of the fabled sylvans.

So men, in the young days of our world, simple in their habits and customs, expressed their joy that the cold and murky days of winter were gone, together with all their ever-occurring disagreeable vicissitudes and severities, and that warm and sunny ones had come in their place, and brought with them their usual beauties and delights. Renovated nature invited them into her newly adorned temple to admire her loveliness, and they obeyed the call with the lightheartedness of children; and having hallowed the opening of this festal day by their simple rites, they closed it with the rejoicing of cheerful, perhaps grateful hearts.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next day Cassibelan conveyed to Octavius the tract of land and cattle grazing upon it. This was effected, agreeably to an ancient custom, by presenting him with a handful of earth and stones, in the presence of a few witnesses. This ceremony, though apparently trifling, gave validity to the most important gifts and covenants in early ages, and is an evidence of the patriarchal simplicity and trustworthiness of men in remote times.

The ceremony of a Celtic marriage was also in keeping with the character of this primitive period. Its validity rested on a mutual exchange of a few gifts between the parties in the presence of kindred and friends. The fidelity of the wedded pair indeed depended then, as well as now, on that moral principle and social affection, which is more powerful than the coercive force of human laws and of prescriptive ceremony, and which happily, in all stages of civilisation, exerts a wider and more efficient influence over the social welfare of our race, than all institutions resting only on human sanction.

Octavius presented to Mingala, agreeably to British custom, a bridled horse, with a spear and other warlike weapons, to signify that she must share in the dangers and fatigues of her husband, as well as in his happiness and prosperity. Mingala, in return, gave to the Roman a few articles which were the products of her industry, and pledges of her intention to be, not only his companion in pleasure, but the careful and kind mistress of his home. Condidan, as father of the bride, gave, on his part, his arms to Octavius; and the bridal ceremony concluded with the newly married pair making small presents to their assembled friends. When, however, the wedded parties were poor, instead of offering, they received gifts from the company.

Celtic marriages were always celebrated with much feasting and rejoicing, which lasted many days. But the festivities consequent on the wedding of the Roman soldier and British maiden were more than usually joyful, as they were united with the annual games of the jovial May season, during which labour was wholly suspended among all classes. Wrestling, leaping, and running races were the principal sports in which the youth engaged. A few young warriors tried their skill in driving the war-chariots; but a greater number

vied with each other in the dexterous management of the bow and arrow, and in the throwing the stone from the sling.* These primitive sports and pastimes, while they gratified a desire of amusement, were greatly promotive both of health and muscular power, and increased the skill of the British youth as huntsmen and warriors. When the days of public and private rejoicing were passed, and Octavius had settled down into the position of a British chief, his thoughts reverted to the earliest period of his captivity in Britain. He thought of that humble friend who had dressed his wounds, fed him, and watched over him in the rude forest hut. He thought of the many times, while he lay on that rushy floor, that he had been

* It is uncertain whether the Britons were acquainted with the art of slinging stones, though it is probable they were, as the art was, if not anterior to, at least coeval with, that of archery, in which they excelled. Many of their customs have been traced to an Oriental origin, and indicate the Britons to have been an offset from an Oriental stock. The Jews, in an early era of their history, were acquainted with the art of slinging, as were some neighbouring nations at a still more remote period. Strutt, whose opinion on the sports and pastimes of the people is entitled to considerable deference, says, "it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the Britons were ignorant of this art. In the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland, it was common, a few years ago, for every chieftain to keep a large round stone near his dwelling, and every stranger was invited to give proofs of his skill and strength in throwing this stone to as great a distance as possible." (*Strutt's Sports and Pastimes.*)

comforted by the poor slave. During his sojourn in Ver, when perplexed and rendered anxious by the uncertainties of his lot, he had often, too, been cheered by the steady affection of that lowly man. He now recalled all Cormo's disinterested friendship, with a strong desire to gladden the heart of his first and most faithful friend in Britain. He had often felt this desire when, as a poor captive, he had nothing to bestow, except a word of sympathy; but now the time had come when he could return the consolation he had received, and could even make Cormo a happy man. Having previously made the arrangements necessary to effect the object he had in view, Octavius entered the shed one morning while Cormo was at work, with no other apparent purpose than to converse with him as in past times.

Cormo was more than usually silent and sad; for having, during the last few days, unrestrainedly indulged his joy at the good fortune of his Roman friend, his thoughts now reverted to himself; and he had passed from one extreme of rejoicing at another's happiness to that of his own mournful, and, as it seemed to him, hopeless lot.

"Cormo, why so sorrowful to-day?" said Octavius. "I thought your face would always wear a smile, now that my bonds are removed, and I

have escaped that fate we so long and so much dreaded."

"I do rejoice, and I ever shall, that my kind Roman master is now a great chief," said the slave; "but," he added with a sigh, "wherefore should I be merry? what have I to do with joy? The sun shines not brightly for me. A dark cloud overshadows my saddened spirit. I must toil from moon to moon, slave-like, and never more hope. Never again may I tread the hunting-grounds; never shall I mingle with the brave on the battle-field. I am the last of my race, a lone man, and my honour is taken from me. No smiles to encourage me when I go out; no kindly voice to welcome me home. I must walk my lonely path unblest. Like the sheep in the pen or on the green, I live at my master's bidding; like them, I shall die unlamented. No bardic song will rise over my resting-place; no stone be set up, or mound be raised, to tell to warriors of future times, here lies the son of the brave Cormac. My tribe has been scattered, trodden down, and forgotten, and none is left to sing of its fame. Darkness has settled on the name of my people. How, then, can joy live in my poor heart? I am like the stricken tree; and shall soon wither and pass away from the face of men."

Cormo rested on his staff, and looked sorrowfully at Octavius. The appeal was irresistible, and the Roman could no longer retain the glad secret he had come to disclose.

“Cormo, for many moons you have been the slave of Condidan,” said Octavius. “Now you are the bondsman of a new master. He has given you to me, and I give you back to yourself. Take this spear, and be free.”

Octavius put the spear into the passive hand of the Briton, who stood amazed and speechless. He scarcely understood what his ears had heard, the news was so sudden, so joyous. His poor bruised heart could not realise it. The light of freedom had fallen so unexpectedly upon his despairing mind, as greatly, for a moment, to bewilder him. To rouse him from his confusion, the Roman was obliged to reassure him, “that he was a free man, free as the eagle on the mountain-top, and as the fleet deer in the forest-glade. Henceforth put away your sorrow,” continued Octavius, “and be glad that your bonds are struck off. Come out from the prison-cell of slavery, and follow me to the joyous chase, and on the path of glory. We have together feared and hoped and desponded; now we will laugh and sing and be merry.”

While Octavius was speaking, Cormo had partly recovered from the effect of that sudden and unlooked-for joy which, like sorrow, sometimes confuses the mind. He had begun to realise the glad change in his condition, and the last words of the Roman brought him to a full sense of his happiness. He clapped his hands, uttered a shout of tumultuous joy, and cast on Octavius a look that bespoke the intense feeling of gratitude which was welling up in his warm heart. He rushed out of the narrow house of bondage into the wide temple of freedom, and ran from that shed where he had passed so many moons of dull, unvarying toil and despondency, to the house of Taxmillan, in which dwelt the most beloved object of his affections.

Such, it is imagined, were the ancient Britons, — simple in their manners, usages, and trains of thought and feeling. The picture may be a faint one, and not in every instance true to nature; but still it is hoped that it is not, on the whole, unfaithfully drawn. The reader must bear in mind that the historical notices of our Celtic ancestors are few and scanty, and throw but a

faint light upon their actual condition. Much, indeed, of what is attributed to them is necessarily inferential. But surely this ground of historic delineation is not to be deemed deceptive or unsafe, when pursued with due caution and just discrimination. For the Britons had passions and desires, feelings, affections, and wants similar to other men. They were endowed with the same instincts as we are; and subject to the restraints of great primary principles, which are common to the whole human species.

The leading traits in the character of the Britons were hospitality and bravery; their worst propensity was an insatiable love of war, which engenders more or less of ferocity and cruelty, and which would probably have carried them further on in the downward path of brutality and savageness, if it had not been for the guiding and ameliorating influence of the teaching and discipline of the Druid. His spiritual domination was certainly salutary, and kept the wild passions of the people from being hurried, by every excitement, into violence and blood-thirstiness.

To look for right views of the duties and destinies of man, and of the divine character and providence, so necessary to a high tone of moral feeling and a truly virtuous and beneficent life, among

the Britons, would be futile and unreasonable. Their knowledge of the Supreme Being, and of the duties and destination of rational and responsible creatures, was very limited, and their conceptions very erroneous. They venerated and worshipped divinities to whom, when it suited the purpose of the priest, were attributed passions as fierce as their own, and to appease which even human sacrifices were occasionally deemed needful. No wonder, then, that the worshipper should himself often be cruel and vindictive—a state of mind to which, not only his religious rites and training, but his inclinations and favourite pursuits, led him.

The Druids, it may be conceived, had more enlarged views of the power and wisdom of the Deity, than the people whom they ruled; but it is difficult to believe that their conceptions of his *moral* character and dealings were much in advance of those entertained by the Britons themselves. There can, however, be no doubt that, on the whole, they were benefactors to the people whom they governed, though the love of pre-eminence and power, common to all priests, prevented them from effecting that full amount of good of which they were capable. They communicated as much light to the Briton, and kept him in as much

darkness, as suited their own purposes. They suffered his mind to be degraded and enslaved by superstition. And such has ever been, and will continue to be, the state of the spiritually ruling and the ruled, until the angel of Christian truth enlighten all men, and make them one, by holy affections, with an all-merciful Father, and lead their hopes and aspirations to an immortal and heavenly world.

THE END.

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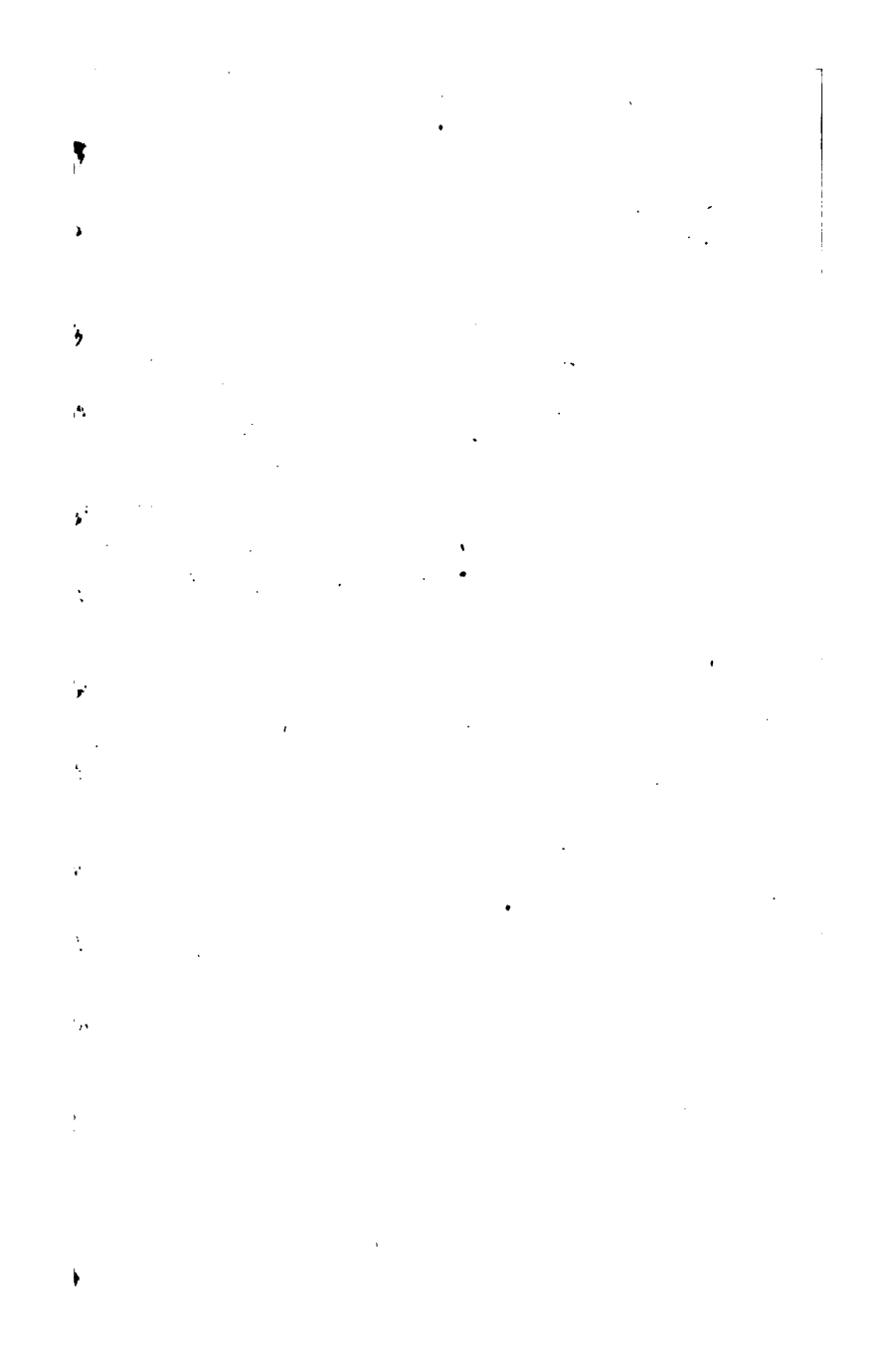
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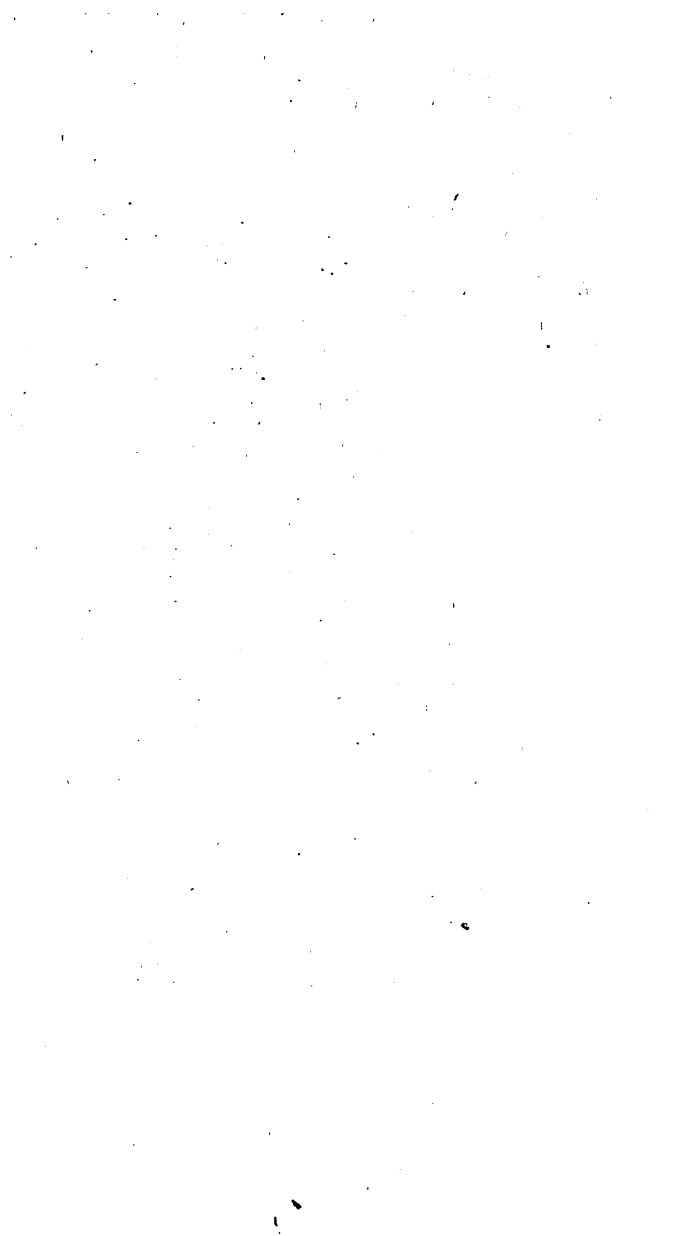
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